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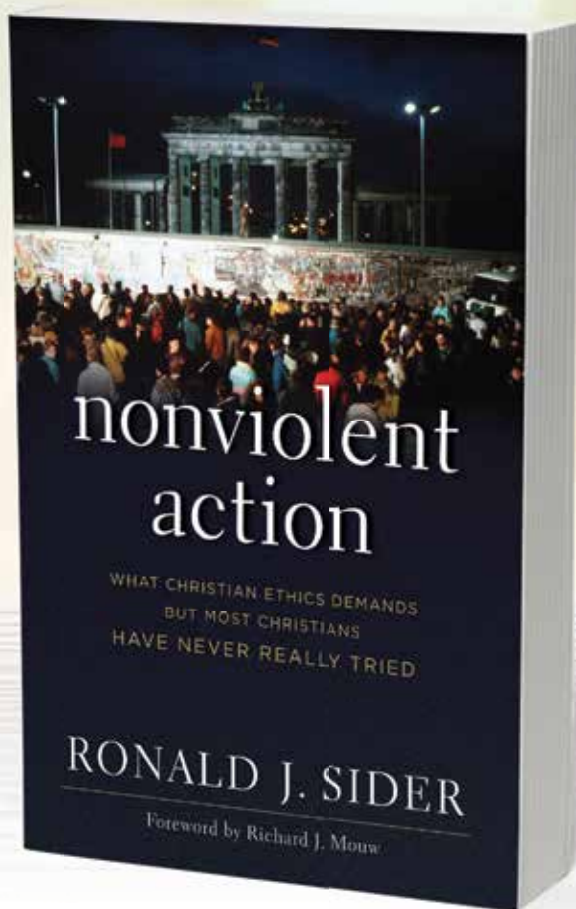
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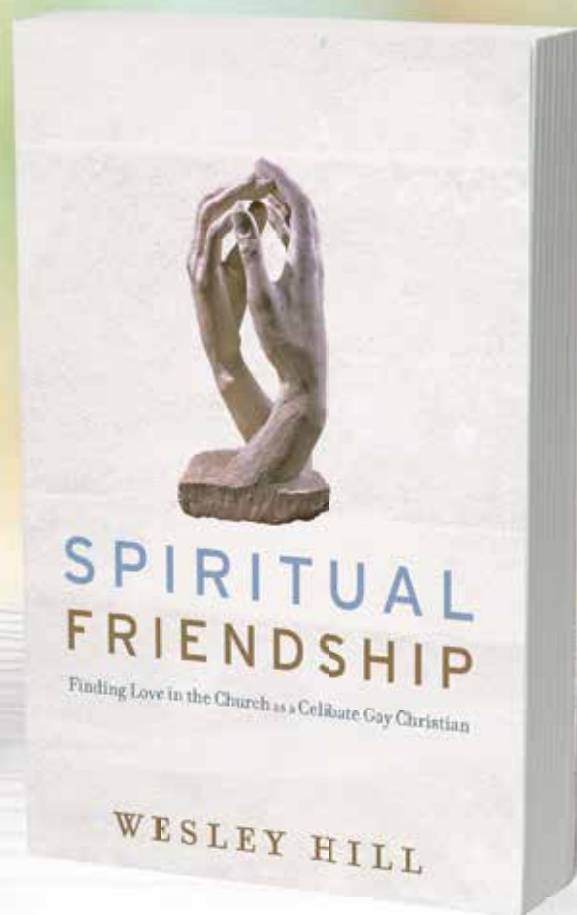


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FORMER U.S. POET Laureate Kay Ryan, in her poem “Waste,” wrote, “Nothing is exempt from resurrection.” That insistence on redeeming the past—on refusing to allow what’s come before to determine our fate—shines through several articles in this issue. Richard Twiss, a Lakota activist and pastor, tells stories of the former demonization of Native drumming and other Indigenous music—and how Native Christians today are finding new meaning, and new life, in old traditions.

Former jail guard Tobias Winright has gone back to prison—to teach college classes to both inmates and guards in the Missouri state prison system—and discovered that education is one of the most effective ways to help released prisoners stay out for good.



And Dee Curry is no longer homeless—and is clean and sober—thanks to help she received from “housing first” advocates, proof that the past isn’t necessarily prologue.

WE’RE USED TO hearing that we shouldn’t just spend our money, but rather we should make our money work for us. Most Americans have little choice but to do the former, but many of those who are able to

save for their retirement often do so without paying too much attention to where their money is going. People who are strongly committed to working against, say, climate change and nuclear war might be surprised to find that the mutual funds in their 401(k) accounts contain shares of fossil-fuel companies or weapons manufacturers.

We may be clear about our convictions and values, about the injustice we oppose in this world—but we may not realize that we’re helping to pay for it.

In this issue, we explore four examples of campaigns that are encouraging us to “move our money”—to make our investments reflect our values and serve as tools to bring about change. Money talks, it is said, but when it walks it speaks even louder. ■

Letters

OCCUPY INJUSTICE

I am thankful for Dominique DuBois Gilliard’s “The Unbearable Whiteness of Being” (April 2015). His phrases explain our status quo in the U.S.: “American Empire,” “exceptionalism,” “social sentinel [that] names boundaries and polices purity,” “encoded within our moral language,” and “ethical superiority.” These ideas have become ingrained in our society and, unfortunately, accepted by far too many Americans.

As a retired teacher, I became a member of the Occupy movement. I wanted to work toward justice by helping to expose greed, which especially hurts the marginalized. This was, for me, an opportunity to demonstrate that we are all sisters and brothers in Christ. We must not allow silence or complacency to keep us, as Gilliard states, “from responding to one another based on a baptismal ethic that calls us into solidarity with one another, rather than a capitalistic logic that pits us against one another.” Even some universities hire professors who are handpicked by the corporate world to further their agendas.

We must come to grips with our history so that truth can set us free—free to become a nation not of continued exploitation, but rather one attempting to embody all-encompassing fairness.

Sharon Wright
Erie, Pennsylvania

“I wanted to work toward justice by helping to expose greed.”

O CHANGING TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

In regard to Ryan Rodrick Beiler’s article “Pro-Israeli, Pro-Palestinian, Pro-Jesus” (March 2015) concerning the prospects for Palestinian-Israeli peace, it would be worthwhile to examine unemotionally the demographics of the area. There have been Christian communities in the Middle East since the time of Christ. There has, of course, been a lessening in numbers since the advent of Islam, but in the past 50 years there has been drastic erosion. The town of Bethlehem, once a thriving, prosperous, virtually all-Christian community, is now but a shadow of its former self. This marked decline is evident everywhere except in Israel proper, where the Christian population, virtually all Arab, is growing both through natural increase and immigration.

Sol Schindler
Bethesda, Maryland

ANTI-SEMITIC VS. UNINFORMED

As someone who, I confess, has frequently nodded along at the gospels’ sweeping

language, I read Amy-Jill Levine’s “Stop Picking on the Pharisees!” (March 2015) with great interest. Her fine piece and the additional reading it inspired have convinced me that certain Christian criticisms (Luke’s “money-lovers” charge, for example) are unfair and promote harmful stereotypes, while others (Jesus’ discussion of the Sabbath in Mark 2:23-28) demonstrate not distortion, but legitimate theological critique. I regret that such subtleties are missing from the article’s headlines, which I know Levine did not pen. Far from arguing that “Christian criticism of the Pharisees is anti-Semitic,” Levine says “[t]he pastors and priests who make such comments are not anti-Semites.” Instead they are, as I was before reading this piece, insufficiently informed.

Adam Pachter
Arlington, Massachusetts

“I have something to say about that!” Write to letters@sojo.net or *Letters, Sojourners*, 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. Include your name, city, and state. Letters may be edited.

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The Uncommon Tour

RACE • POVERTY • INEQUALITY

Inequality has been called the defining issue of our times. Let Sojourners help your church or campus go deeper in its understanding of biblical equality and its implications for race and poverty in our world.

Lisa Sharon Harper offers inspiring theological foundations for biblical equality and informative content on the intersection of poverty and race in the U.S. Providing hands-on organizing, advocacy, and media training, Harper and other Sojourners staff members will help motivate your congregation or students to work toward a more just and peaceful world.

This training is shaped and guided in every way by our commitment to follow the teachings of Jesus and designed to enable people of faith to contribute their unique gifts to the broader movement of justice.

Sojourners is now offering one-, two-, and three-day Uncommon Tour events for groups and budgets of every size. Limited dates are available. To book a 2015 date or get more information, email us at uncommontour@sojo.net.



A RACE & POVERTY INITIATIVE FROM **sojourners**

BY JIM WALLIS

Building Beloved Communities



ONE OF MY favorite descriptions for the people of God, what the New Testament calls the “body of Christ,” is the evocative language of “the beloved community” used by Martin Luther King Jr. during the civil rights movement.

A *beloved community* is a powerful vision of a new coming together, a new community that welcomes all peoples in their diverse ethnicities and nationalities. *Every* group, clan, and tribe is included and invited in. That dream and vision undergirded King’s movement for civil and voting rights, both spiritually and philosophically, and deeply reflected his own underlying moral belief and hope as a Christian minister.

Yet in one of his most famous quotations, King also said this: “I

“7.4 percent of U.S. congregations were multiracial in 1998, [and] in 2010 that figure had grown to 13.7 percent.” In other words, truly multiracial congregations in the United States are still very much the exception to the rule. At the same time, it is highly encouraging that their number nearly doubled in just over a decade.

Some might ask: Why should we be concerned about whether or not people of different races worship together? Well, when you look at what the Bible says about what the “body of Christ” is supposed to be—and *was* during the earliest days of the beginning church—the racial segregation of U.S. churches is nothing short of sinful. Paul tells us in Galatians 3:28 that “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” When we look at our largely segregated churches, how can we say that we are living into that vision? King’s description of the life of the church was indeed “appalling” when he first uttered these words in the 1950s, and the reality of churches separated by race is still appalling today in the first quarter of the 21st century. I believe there is a biblical call to create multiracial communities of faith, and we must examine how we can make progress toward that wonderful but difficult goal.

The apostle Paul describes how in Christ, we are one body (1 Corinthians 12:12-26). He compares the church to the human body, saying when “one part suffers, all parts suffer with it.” What does that mean when brothers and sisters in black churches suffer the pain of economic discrimination, disproportional negative experiences with the criminal justice system, and the

police shooting deaths of all-too-many young black men? Do all the parts of the body in white churches suffer with the parts of the body in black churches when they do? If white churches truly did, that would change the whole conversation about race in the U.S. Right now, there are two different conversations going on in our churches about race: one in our white churches and one in our churches where people of color are the majority. Instead, we need to be talking *to each other*.

To their credit, some church denominations and organizations have gotten this message. The Evangelical Covenant Church organizes “Sankofa Journeys,” which pair Christians of different races together in four days of intensive prayer and travel through major sites of past and present racial injustice. The Southern Baptist Convention dedicated a national leadership summit held in March to the topic of race, and leaders there spoke candidly about the denomination’s racist past. Many other churches and church organizations are active in promoting racial justice. Yet to the extent that the church is trying to repair racial injustice in society while congregations themselves remain largely homogeneous, true progress will be limited.

It’s not easy to face the deep wounds of racism in our country and in our church. It requires self-examination and repentance. But just as Christ reconciled us to God, let us show each other the peace and mercy we have received. The church must be at the forefront of racial reconciliation and justice and healing in this country. It is nothing less than our calling. ■

Jim Wallis is editor-in-chief of Sojourners magazine.

The Bible calls us to create multiracial communities of faith.

am ashamed and appalled at the fact that 11 o’clock on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in Christian America.” He said this in 1953, while he was still associate pastor at his father’s Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. But obviously, and most painfully, that quote is still true today.

Incredibly, prior to 1998 there was no good national data on how many U.S. churches were “multiracial.” In this context, a multiracial congregation is one in which less than 80 percent of members belong to any single race. This definition is now widely used by scholars of modern religion, including Michael O. Emerson, the definitive scholar on multiracial congregations. According to scientific surveys of U.S. congregations of all faiths, Emerson has observed that

Boston Globe



Moving Forward

Brian Glenney and Sara Hendren launched the Accessible Icon Project to give a familiar symbol (first used in 1969) an important redesign. “There needed to be a change in the way we symbolize people with disabilities, but also the way that we perceive them,” explained Glenney. Instead of a passive figure sitting in a chair, the new icon features a person leaning forward with arms bent backward—a posture that emphasizes activity and agency. Started as a guerilla art project in Boston, the new icon is being adopted from Phoenix to New York.

By Fran Quigley

Seeing Through ‘Right-to-Work’ Laws

It’s in the interest of us all to protect the right of labor to organize.

WHAT’S NOT TO like about a law called “right to work”?

It is a label that invokes the best of our U.S. national persona: a dedication both to individual freedom and to the important role that our labors play in developing personal character and community prosperity. When Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker signed a so-called right-to-work law in early March, making his state the 25th in the country to adopt such legislation, he did so on a desk emblazoned with a bold sign saying “Freedom to Work.”

The problem with right-to-work laws is that they are a lie.

For generations, legislation drafted under this label has been promoted by people and organizations whose priorities are *not* to enhance the autonomy and welfare of our nation’s workers, but to crush them. Aimed at weakening collective bargaining rights, these laws trace their origins beyond the 1980s union attacks led by Ronald Reagan,

past the 1940s Southern strategy to beat blacks out of the labor force, to a 19th century “Northern strategy” that equated “collective bargaining with the enslavement of free white men,” according to sociologist Cedric de Leon.

Right-to-work laws prohibit a company and its workers from agreeing that workers who benefit from a union-negotiated contract should pay fees to that union. The only “right” protected is the privilege of workers to benefit from union advocacy without paying for its cost. The goal is to drain the resources of those unions, smothering workers’ ability to collectively bargain for better wages and working conditions.

In addition to the pitch for “individual worker freedom,” right-to-work laws are sold as providing a boost to local economies. “We now have given one more big thing on that checklist to say that Wisconsin is open for business,” Walker said before signing the new law.

But the data do not back up the rhetoric. There is little compelling evidence that right-to-work laws jump-start the economies of states where they have been enacted. By contrast, there is plenty of proof that these laws further impoverish U.S. workers. People living in right-to-work states endure lower wages and higher poverty rates than their counterparts in states with greater freedom for collective workplace bargaining. And though right-to-work laws may boost the number of businesses in a state, the gains mostly go to the owners. “Although right-to-work states may be more attractive to business,” Hofstra University statistician Lonnie Stevens concluded, “this does not necessarily translate into enhanced economic verve in the right-to-work state if there is little ‘trickle-down’ from business owners to the non-unionized workers.”

None of this is surprising. Union membership and collective bargaining help level

Our Mission

The mission of *Sojourners* magazine is to inspire hope and action by articulating the biblical call to racial and social justice, life and peace, and environmental stewardship.

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an otherwise uneven playing field between employees and business owners; as a result, they are well-proven to raise wages and increase access to benefits.

For those of us who are not members of unions, much less dependent on the collection of union dues, why should we be concerned about right-to-work laws?

We may be more reliant on unions than we think. The current record levels of income inequality in the U.S. correspond with a sharp decline in union membership. That inequality drains our tax base, spikes the demand for public assistance, and destabilizes the communities where we live.

The core tenets of our faith demand that we preserve special concern for the struggling workers among us. Drawing from clear biblical foundations (see Jeremiah 22:13 or James 5:1-6, for instance), papal encyclicals vigorously promote the rights of workers to organize and bargain collectively. And labor rights have been a foundation of the Protestant social gospel movement since

Washington Gladden took to the pulpit in 1865.

Martin Luther King Jr. carried that tradition into the modern era, where he saw through the right-to-work smokescreen. "In our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans, such as 'right to work,'" King said. "It is a law to rob us of our civil rights and job rights. Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining by which unions have improved wages and working conditions of everyone."

That was in 1961. King's concluding statement about right-to-work laws is as true today as it was a half-century ago: "We demand this fraud be stopped." ■

Fran Quigley, author of How Human Rights Can Build Haiti, is clinical professor and director of the Health and Human Rights Clinic at Indiana University McKinney School of Law.

By Jerry L. Van Marter

A 'Dramatic Turnaround'

Presbyterians vote to accept marriage equality.

BY CHANGING THE definition of marriage in its constitution from "between a man and a woman" to "between two people, traditionally a man and a woman," the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has joined a number of other religious groups in the U.S. in allowing same-sex marriage.

In so doing, the 1.75 million-member denomination completed a dramatic turnaround on marriage equality. In 2012—at a time when same-sex marriage was legal in only a handful of states—the 220th PC(USA) General Assembly was so deeply divided on the issue that it merely called for two years of "serious study and discernment" of Christian marriage.

The 2014 General Assembly—with nearly two dozen states by then having legalized same-sex marriage—voted 429-175 to recommend the constitutional change. By March of this year, the requisite majority of the PC(USA)'s 172 presbyteries (regional governing bodies) had ratified the proposal.

Reaction to the change was immediate, and predictable.

"The change aligns the church's constitution with a reality that has long been true: Both same-gender and opposite-gender couples have been living in relationships that demonstrate covenant faithfulness, shared discipleship, and mutual love," said the Covenant Network of Presbyterians, a group that since its founding in 1997 has been working for the full inclusion of LGBTQ Presbyterians in the church. "We rejoice that all couples can now see those relationships solemnized before God and the Christian community in marriage, at the discretion of ministers and sessions."

The new constitutional language grants full discretion to ministers to decide whether they will perform same-sex marriages and to church sessions (congregational governing bodies) to authorize the use of church property for such ceremonies.

The Fellowship Community, which represents most of the conservative end of the

From the Archives

June 1990

Trafficked

I WAS just 15, and as the eldest I had to do something to help my family. When the captain of our local army squadron introduced a recruiter to my parents, I was ready to go anywhere. He made it sound so nice! I would go to Japan and work in a famous hotel as a professional dancer. It would mean lots of money to send home to my poor family in the Philippines. Of course, I would have to go to Manila first to be trained, and I would have to change my name to fit my new life.

So I became Mami! My recruiter was from a Philippine entertainment production group. They “train” their girls mainly in the clubs and bars on Mabini Street in Manila. My recruiter wanted me to go to Japan as a prostitute, but I demanded to go as an entertainer. ... I was told that if I learned Japanese songs and took dancing lessons I could get an entry visa for show business—in six months. He let me work in his bar while I was waiting, but after two months I asked him to get me a fake passport and visa as I was worried about my family. Later on I learned that all these kindnesses were deducted from my earnings in Japan. By the way, the Aquino government claims it prohibits its people from being engaged in “shameful work,” but while I was in Manila, my Japanese recruiter alone interviewed 20 new girls like me—every day! ■

Naoko Iyori, MMB, worked with the Japanese Catholic Council for Justice and Peace in Tokyo when this article, a composite of the actual experiences of several women from the Philippines, appeared.



PC(USA) spectrum, stated: “By approving this change we are disregarding the clear teaching of scripture, the wisdom of those who have lived and died for the faith before us, and the continuing consensus of the contemporary church around the world. To do this is both disobedient and unwise. We know this particular change was intended by its proponents to extend the grace and the good news of Jesus Christ, and to further the witness of his Kingdom. We believe it accomplishes neither.”

The move will accelerate the departure of dissident congregations from the PC(USA). About 200 of the denomination’s 10,100 congregations have left to join more conservative communions since the constitution was amended in 2010 to allow the ordination of gay and lesbian Presbyterians as church officers. They have gone primarily to the 35-year-old Evangelical Presbyterian Church or the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians, which was established in 2012. The number of departed churches is relatively small but

includes several of the PC(USA)’s largest congregations.

On the other hand, many Presbyterians believe the resolution of the gay ordination and same-sex marriage issues will free up the denomination to focus more time and resources on mission and evangelism activities. The burgeoning “1,001 New Worshiping Communities” movement in the PC(USA) has identified more than 250 new faith communities within the church since the movement was officially launched in 2012. More than half of them are racial-ethnic and many others are fueled by young adults.

A recent gathering of progressive Presbyterians, “NEXT Church,” drew nearly 1,000 participants to Chicago. It met as the deciding vote was cast for marriage equality in the church. ■

Jerry L. Van Marter retired in December 2014 after 27 years reporting for the Presbyterian News Service, the official news agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

By Emily Atkin

Who Owns the Sun?

Utility companies promote laws that seek to prevent rooftop solar systems.

FOR SOMETHING as simple as sunlight, the solar energy industry can be a bit complicated. But that never stopped pastor Brian Flory from trying to see the light.

“Putting solar panels on the roof of our congregation was important to us,” said Flory, who runs the Beacon Heights Church of Brethren in Fort Wayne, Ind. “For us it seemed like a wonderful opportunity to live out the values that our faith was leading us toward.”

To live out one of the core values of his faith—being good stewards of God’s creation—Flory began the process of installing panels on his church’s roof in 2014. He’d barely raised the needed \$20,000 to support the project when a bill in the Indiana state legislature nearly stopped him in his tracks.

House Bill 1320, introduced in January 2015 by Republican Rep. Eric Koch was intended to severely disincentivize individuals in Indiana from installing solar panels

on their homes, businesses, and churches. If it was signed into law, Flory said, his whole project would be doomed.

The Indiana bill is not the only one of its kind. It is part of an ongoing effort across the country by a group called the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). Backed by billionaire brothers Charles and David Koch, the influential right-wing group has pushed bills like this in multiple states: Utah, Georgia, Wisconsin, and Arizona, to name a few. Their goal, ultimately, is to make sure the rapid growth of rooftop solar does not cut into electrical utilities’ profits, in which many of ALEC’s members are heavily invested.

These bills all run on a variation of what the Indiana bill sought to do. Under it, solar customers who want to sell the excess power they generate back to the electrical grid would receive substantially less money than before—as much as 60 to 70 percent less. In

addition, power utilities would be allowed to add a fixed monthly charge to solar users' bills, as well as added interconnection fees.

In short, this means that customers who want to generate their own power from the sun would have to pay a whole lot more to do it.

These efforts have had a unique impact on the faith community. Flory said he felt it was an attack on his congregation's religious liberty—that is, their ability to carry out what they see as God's will to not only preserve creation, but to make sure they weren't contributing to climate change,

These laws severely disincentivize churches from installing solar panels.

which affects the most vulnerable and marginalized of society.

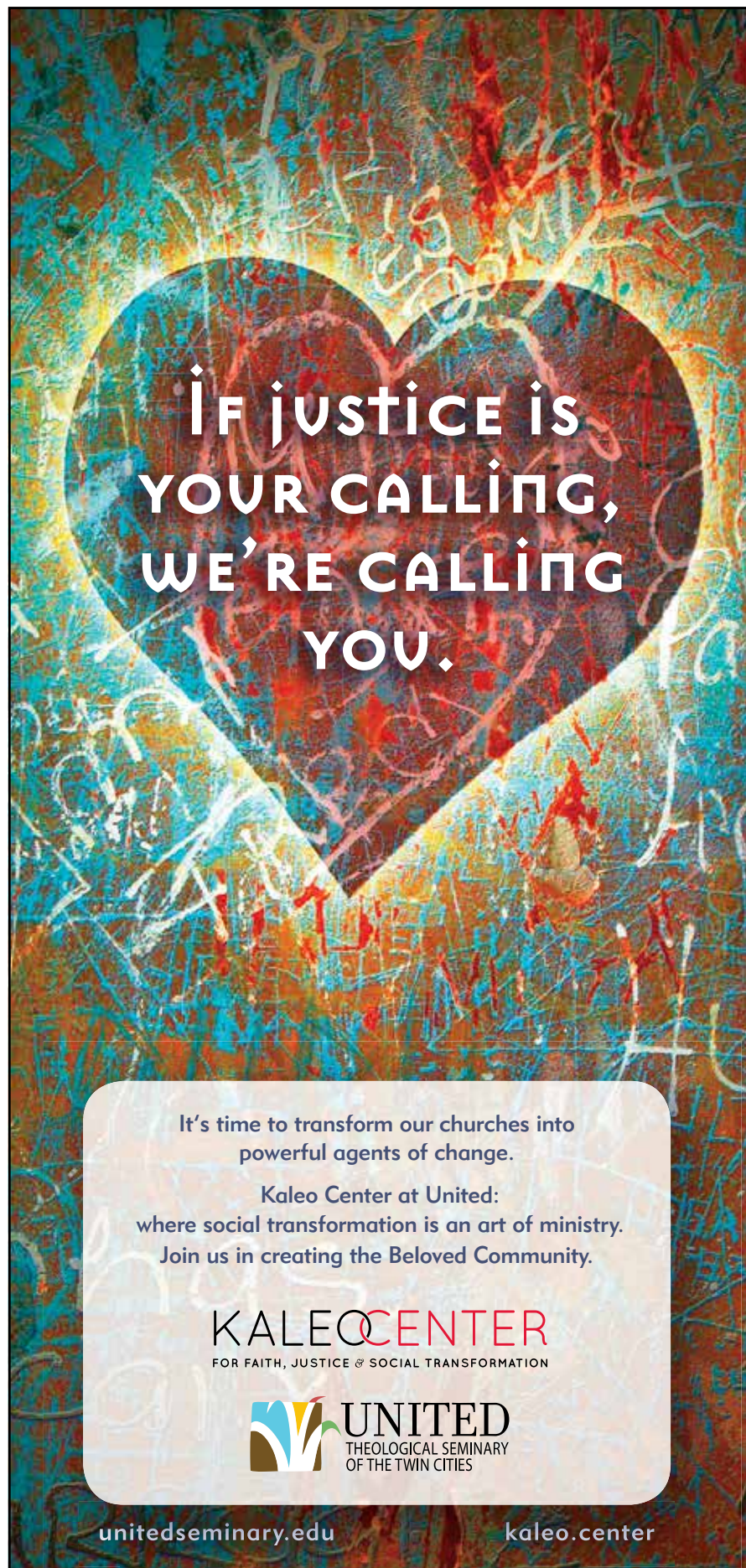
"By introducing these questions—by putting a degree of economic uncertainty for what we were going to be doing—this was putting a real question into our ability to exercise our faith values," he said. "We are a church that believes strongly in the stewardship of God's creation."

Fortunately for Flory and his congregation, House Bill 1320 was pulled from the legislature's calendar after a wave of outrage—some of which came from Flory himself. Partnering with the faith-based climate advocacy group Hoosier Interfaith Power and Light, Flory testified in front of the state legislature to oppose the bill, saying he believed the effort "punishes congregations like ours for good and faithful behavior."

It is likely that the bill or something like it will come back to the Hoosier State despite Flory's and other faith leaders' objections. In the meantime, though, Flory says he's getting those panels on his church.

"The cost of solar panels is coming down dramatically," he said. "We're full steam ahead." ■

Emily Atkin is a deputy climate editor and reporter at ThinkProgress in Washington, D.C.



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Christian Nation vs. Secular Country?

AS WE SWING into the 2016 presidential campaign, we Americans can be certain of at least one thing: We will be treated to another round of very public arguments about the role of religion in our republic. If this were a boxing match, and if past patterns persist, the title of the bout would be Christian Nation vs. Secular Country. The sides, more eager to mobilize their own than have a conversation with the other, will happily seek to bludgeon one another.

Thankfully, a number of writers have set out to complicate this picture in a way that adds both color and hope. Peter Manseau's *One Nation, Under Gods* and Denise Spellberg's *Thomas Jefferson's Quran* are beautifully written accounts of our interfaith country. By interfaith, I mean both that there were people of different faith persuasions present from our earliest days, and that they constantly bumped into one another as they established their communities and sought to build up this country.

That interaction often went badly—the Salem witch trials, the anti-Catholic Know Nothing party,

"The old hatreds shall someday pass; the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve."

and present day anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are just some examples. As Manseau writes, "The story of how a global array of beliefs came to occupy the same ocean-locked piece of land is more often one of violence than of toleration."

But there are inspiring threads of pluralism in the American tapestry as well. As Manseau puts it, "the repeated collision of conflicting systems of belief, followed frequently by ugly and violent conflict,



has somehow arrived, again and again, not merely at peaceful coexistence but at striking moments of inter-influence."

Both of these books display the full fabric.

While Manseau's is more of a straightforward (if alternate) history in its recounting of interesting interfaith events, Spellberg's is a deep dive into Thomas Jefferson's philosophical imagination. Drawing on the writings of the famed English philosopher John Locke, Jefferson wanted to create for himself and his new nation a case that would test the limits of the religious liberty and pluralism his founding documents called for. He chose the archetype of "the Muslim." While the archetype was long viewed in Europe as bloodthirsty and evil, Jefferson imagined him (and the figure in Jefferson's imagination was most certainly male) as a citizen.

Spellberg puts it this way: "while some fought to exclude a group whose

inclusion they feared would ultimately portend the undoing of the nation's Protestant character, a pivotal minority, also Protestant, perceiving the ultimate benefit and justice of a religiously plural America, set about defending the rights of future Muslim citizens."

There are many important topics in a presidential campaign. What to make of a nation that (some scholars say) is the most religiously diverse country in human history and the most religiously devout in the Western hemisphere at a time of global religious tension is certainly one of them. Such conversations ought to be informed by books like

the ones I mention above. And after reading them, you'll be looking for a conversation much richer than the Christian Nation vs. Secular Country battle to which we have become so accustomed.

Whoever wins the White House in the end, I hope the inaugural address in January 2017 includes a line like the one in President Obama's January 2009 speech: "For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and non-believers ... we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace." ■



Eboo Patel, founder of the Interfaith Youth Core, writes about social justice from his perspective as a Muslim American of Indian heritage.

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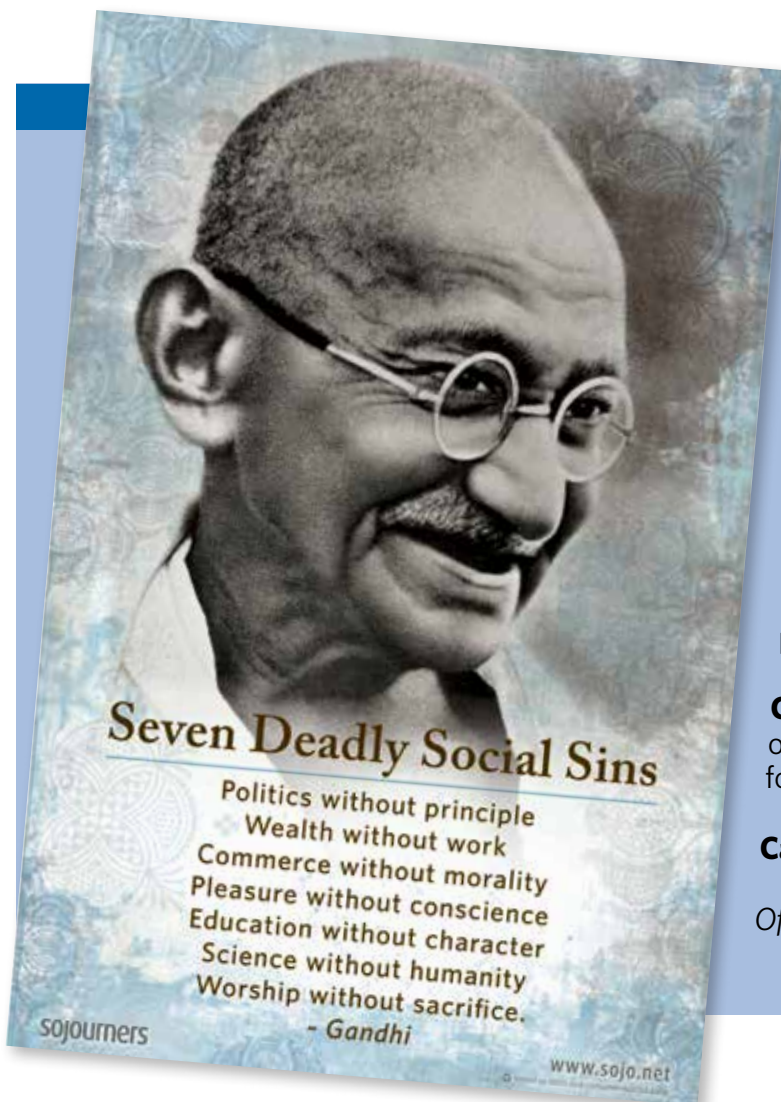
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DIV



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Various campaigns have adopted the tactic of divestment to compel action toward a safer, more just, and more sustainable world. Does it work?

IT WASN'T A HUGE surprise last year when Union Seminary announced that it would become the first seminary in the world to divest from fossil fuels. Union, after all, has long been a leader in progressive causes, and President Serene Jones said that “divestment of our endowment from fossil-fuel companies is one small step” toward stopping the catastrophic threat—the “sin”—of climate change.

But a few months later, the divestment movement reached an altogether different level when the Rockefeller Brothers Fund announced that it was moving its money from fossil fuels, starting with the worst carbon polluters, coal and tar sands. The Rockefeller money, of course, came from oil—patriarch John D. Rockefeller was the co-founder of Standard Oil—and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund controls \$860 million in assets. All in all, 180 institutions have pledged to divest more than \$50 billion to defund climate change—and, as they say, with billions in assets moved, pretty soon you’re talking real money.

Divestment from fossil fuels has become the largest and most visible divestment movement since the efforts to isolate South Africa’s apartheid regime in the 1980s, but it’s far from the only social justice campaign to use the tactic. As the articles in this issue show, activists working on a range of matters are engaging in “move your money” campaigns to supplement—and sometimes magnify the power of—other organizing strategies.

Illustration by Nicholas Little



Many of these activists share an assumption about investments and about money in general: How we use our money isn't a morally neutral question. While the goal isn't some mythical "purity," there's a recognition that investments have moral implications. Investing in something good helps that good thing to happen, and the converse is true as well. That kind of thinking has long affected how people of good will, including many Christians, have chosen to invest—or not invest—their money in everything from alcohol and tobacco to animal testing and military weapons.

Some groups, such as the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, have sought to influence corporate policies by using vehicles such as proxy voting, long-term dialogue, and shareholder resolutions instead of divestment. But even ICCR has acknowledged that "divestment may be appropriate when a company with egregious practices has failed to respond to a long-term engagement." Tim Brennan, CFO of the Unitarian Universalist Association and a longtime advocate of shareholder activism, encouraged respect for various strategies, including divestment, but with a caveat: "For some, divestment could be an option. But please, not quiet divestment. ... Investors who choose to divest must speak loudly about why they are taking this action."

Shelley Alpern of Clean Yield Asset Management said that divestment actually strengthens other tactics. "Engagement without divestment is like having laws on the books with no police to [enforce] them," she said. "Let's get some teeth."

One of the goals of divestment activists is to "stigmatize" the targets of their work, to make it clear that the policies or practices are unacceptable and intolerable—in other words, to shame them. In her new book *Is Shame Necessary?* Jennifer Jacquet quotes Martin Luther King Jr.'s rationale for nonviolent resistance: "Noncooperation and boycotts are not ends themselves; they are merely means to awaken a sense of moral shame in the opponent." Divestment has already contributed to that awakening—not only in pointing out immorality in the actions of "opponents," but in encouraging all of us to invest in a better future. —The Editors

"People of conscience
need to break their
ties with corporations
financing the injustice of
climate change."

—Desmond Tutu

DIVEST!

from **FOSSIL FUELS**

Money Talks

**Defunding climate change is
"an idea whose time has come."**

By Jenna Nicholas

Last spring, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, an architect of the South African freedom movement, called for "an apartheid-style boycott to save the planet." Tutu—along with millions of people of faith and conscience—understands not only that it is morally right to address climate change, but that money talks. "People of conscience need to break their ties with corporations financing the injustice of climate change," said Tutu.

The fossil-fuel divestment movement has its roots in grassroots mobilizing, churches, local governments, and student campaigns. The movement has grown exponentially in the U.S. since Maine's Unity College became the first campus to divest (in 2012) and the United Church of Christ became the first denomination to formally divest (in 2013). Today, divestment from fossil fuels is gaining momentum, with increasing numbers of asset owners committing to moving their money.

In fact, this campaign has grown faster than any other previous divestment movements, including those against apartheid in South Africa and tobacco. A number of factors indicate that we are at a tipping point. Here are four: 1) last year was the hottest year on record, 2) expenses related to climate change are skyrocketing, 3) significant

FOSS

financial risks are now associated with fossil-fuel investments and the divestment movement is growing, 4) and the economics of renewable energy products is improving, so investments in these products is growing.

Despite unmistakable signs that climate change is spiraling out of control—from unprecedented droughts to sea-level rises—20 years of global negotiations have not slowed the emissions of heat-trapping gasses. A new, effective lever of change is clearly needed.

The boom times for fossil fuels are over—and savvy investors see the writing on the wall. Fossil-fuel investments increasingly carry significant risks. It is estimated that climate change could contribute as much as 10 percent to portfolio risk over the next 20 years.

The smart money is on fossil-fuel divestment. Technically, divestment is just the sale of an asset. It becomes a movement when socially motivated individuals, university endowments, public pension funds, foundations, and cities decide in concert to divest.

Asset owners can decide to withhold their capital from firms seen to be engaging in reprehensible activities. But in the context of a movement, divestment sends a signal. It says business as usual is no longer acceptable. It paves a way for government to enable stricter regulation of the fossil-fuel companies. It pushes corporations to speed up their transition to climate-resistant energy solutions by reinvesting their earnings in clean energy instead of fossil-fuel reserves.

Today, the movement for divestment of fossil fuels is gaining momentum, with increasing numbers of asset owners committing to divestment. In September 2014, more than 70 foundations, in collaboration with individuals, universities, faith-based

groups, schools, hospitals, and cities around the world—representing \$50 billion in assets under management—announced that they would divest from fossil fuels and invest in new energy solutions. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Stanford University were part of this historic announcement.

The good news is that divesting does *not* require financial sacrifice. Carbon-free assets show comparable performance when benchmarked against carbon-intensive assets.

Why not shareholder activism?

Some investors prefer shareholder activism as a way of holding corporations accountable. In many campaigns this could be the most pragmatic approach. However, the climate change horizon doesn't allow us the luxury of a slow process of change. It is possible to divest a majority of assets from fossil fuels, while reserving a small amount for shareholder activism. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, furthermore, does not permit shareholder resolutions that aim to change a company's *core* business activities—and in the case of climate change, core change may be necessary.

Renewable energy investments are becoming more mainstream. The rapid expansion and more competitive pricing of renewable energy products make them a sound investment. There was a 12 percent increase in global renewable investments in 2014. Led by China and the U.S., global installations of solar capacity rose by more than 20 percent in 2014 to generate enough energy to supply about 16 million homes. Such rapid expansion will lead to a 5 to 10 percent annual decrease in the price of solar installations over the next decade.

The increasing investor demand and

improving cost-competitiveness of renewable energy products are also driving the creation of new financial products. Today, it is possible to create a diversified fossil-free portfolio. There are attractive investment opportunities in every industry and asset class. Investors can also move their money to institutions that direct assets to local communities, building local resilience.

Divest-Invest Philanthropy is an example of how we can *all* take action. Divest-Invest works with foundations to align their investments with their social mission. In the past year, we have seen an increase in the number of participating foundations from 17 to 70, representing \$4.2 billion in assets under management across the U.S., Europe, Australia, Africa, and elsewhere. We are using the transnational economy to leverage change against a global catastrophe.

The movement for fossil-fuel divestment will break our social ties with corporations that are financing climate change. Large-scale political mobilization, such as we saw in New York and around the world last September, is critical to changing government policy. Divest-Invest Philanthropy's goal is to triple its commitment by December 2015 in line with the next U.N. climate talks in Paris.

"To serve as custodians of creation," Desmond Tutu said, "is not an empty title; it requires that we act, and with all the urgency this dire situation demands." For people of faith and conscience, this is an exciting example of the power of an idea whose time has come. ■

Jenna Nicholas, CEO of Phoenix Global Impact, is project manager of the Divest-Invest Philanthropy initiative. Learn more at www.divestinvest.org or gofossilfree.org.

Fossil Fuels

DIVEST!

from **NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

Don't Bank On the Bomb

Divestment by a few institutions based on the same ethical objection can have a significant impact on a company's strategic direction.

By Wilbert van der Zeijden

Nuclear weapons are unacceptable weapons. By design, they aim to cause large-scale and long-term damage not only to enemy troops but to civilians as well.

Humanity has successfully banned and eliminated less devastating weapons, but curiously we have come to live with the idea that some countries are entitled to keep nuclear weapons. Worse, we have come to accept that their production is nothing to be ashamed of and that investing in these companies is sound financial practice.

Investing in genocide is inexcusable, and it is time we tell our banks, pension funds, and insurance companies to stop financing the bomb.

To that end, the Dutch peace organization PAX, for which I'm a senior researcher, produces an annual report called *Don't Bank on the Bomb*, providing a detailed overview of financial institutions that invest in companies building nuclear weapons. But the report does more: It highlights positive examples of financial institutions actively divesting from nuclear weapons producers,

showing that divestment is not only a feasible strategy but also a socially responsible and ethically sound way to watch over the money of clients. Divesting from nuclear weapons is not rocket science.

Campaigning for divestment helps to curtail and eliminate nuclear weapons in more than one way. First, it helps to further stigmatize nuclear weapons. Most people are unaware that their savings help to finance the bomb, and when this is pointed out to them, most people are uneasy or even appalled by the idea. By providing customers with the facts, we stimulate their readiness to take it up with their banks and pension funds and give them notice to divest from these inhumane weapons. This stigmatization of nuclear weapons is more important than we may think. No weapon has ever been eliminated before it was outlawed. And no weapon is outlawed without first becoming stigmatized.

Second, divestment can have very direct effect. By convincing financial institutions to move their money elsewhere, we can cut off funds for producing companies—make them feel their business is dirty, unwanted. While it is unlikely that divestment by a single financial institution would create sufficient pressure on a company for it to end its involvement in nuclear weapons work, divestment by even a few institutions based on the same ethical objection can have a significant impact on a company's strategic direction.

Our sister campaign—Stop Explosive Investments—provides a good example. In that campaign, the focus is divestment from cluster munitions producers. Can you imagine a huge company such as Lockheed



Divestment is not only a feasible strategy but also a socially responsible and ethically sound way to watch over the money of clients.

NUCLEAR WEAPON

DIVEST!

from **TERRORISM**

Martin actually paying attention to such a campaign, or ending their work on weapons? Well, it did, and the corporation said as much in a letter to PAX: “I hope our cessation of the activities in the area of cluster munitions would enable our removal from prohibited investment firms and allow investors to consider Lockheed Martin for inclusion in their portfolios.”

A \$1 trillion industry

The nine nuclear-armed states are planning to spend more than \$1 trillion over the next decade to maintain and modernize their nuclear weapons. While the majority of that money comes from taxpayers in the nuclear-armed countries, the *Don't Bank on the Bomb* report shows that 411 banks, pension funds, and asset managers in 31 countries made \$402 billion available between January 2011 and August 2014 to 28 companies that produce, maintain, and modernize nuclear arsenals in France, India, Israel, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The U.S. is overrepresented here. Roughly two-thirds of all investment in nuclear weapons producers is by U.S. financial institutions. Of the top 10 investors, nine are from the U.S. The top three combined—State Street, Capital Group, and Blackrock—have more than \$80 billion invested.

The U.S. is underrepresented when it comes to positive examples. Of the 35 financial institutions we highlight in our latest report for having a policy curtailing or fully excluding involvement in nuclear weapons producers, zero are based in the U.S. It may come as a surprise to U.S. audiences

that in several European countries, having a policy prohibiting involvement in nuclear weapons production is actually encouraged. In fact, in countries such as Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland, banks and pension funds exclude these dirty investments as part of building their image of being a responsible, sensible, and reliable financial service provider.

Over the past years, several countries have started to experiment with regulation or legislation to end involvement in the production of nuclear weapons. New Zealand, Norway, and Switzerland already have national regulations curtailing the involvement of banks in nuclear weapons production, and discussions on similar measures are ongoing in Australia, Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein, and Ireland.

An international treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons will be needed to fully eliminate them. To get to that prohibition, we need to demonstrate support from the whole of society for a world without nuclear weapons.

Don't Bank on the Bomb aids that process. It allows people to choose better banks, it pushes financial institutions to reconsider their involvement in a potential nuclear Armageddon, and it challenges the acceptability of companies being involved in the production of weapons that are designed to perform crimes against humanity. ■

Wilbert van der Zeijden is a political scientist and senior researcher at the Dutch peace organization PAX (paxforpeace.nl). The most recent report can be found at DontBankontheBomb.com.

The Achilles' Heel of Terror

Tackling their finances is perhaps the most effective way of restricting terrorist groups.

By Rose Marie Berger

The so-called war on terror has dangerous and shifting financial front lines. Since the 9/11 attacks, a series of “anti-terrorism financing laws” have been enacted that allow the government to designate certain charities as “terrorist” organizations or as financing terror. The government can effectively shut down organizations without ever bringing criminal charges or providing evidence against them, according to the ACLU. “As a result,” it reported, “American Muslim organizations and individuals are unfairly targeted.”

In addition to fostering Islamophobia in the larger society and fear within Islamic and other faith communities, overzealous application of these laws can actually inhibit the war on terror. It risks crippling the very Islamic charities that can effectively combat radicalization in places vulnerable to extremists. Stephen Bubb, head of a charity network in Britain, where financial terror laws are similar to those in the U.S., has emphasized “sensible, credible, proportionate regulation” of Islamic charities. “I have witnessed firsthand the difficulties faced by

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organizations in Pakistan fighting the same battle that we are: for security, for a better way of life, and for a better future for our children,” said Bubb.

Yet defunding terror groups can be an important strategy in combatting violence. A broad spectrum of groups in the U.S. today is finding ways to “divest from terror.”

For example, when Mark Langerman, managing director of the Patriot Fund, found out that companies around the world do business with countries that have been named “state sponsors of terror” by the U.S. Department of State, he was shocked. “I was watching the congressional testimony during the Iraq war,” Langerman told *Sojourners*, “and learning that the insurgents were using American weaponry with Iranian fingerprints on it. Our American companies were sponsoring this. It spurred me to action.” Langerman developed the Patriot Fund, which he said is the only mandated “terror-free” mutual fund in the U.S.

The Patriot Fund screens for companies with “active, non-humanitarian business ties that can be verified” to Iran, Syria, Sudan, and North Korea. Langerman said he wanted to give “investors the opportunity to participate in the financial war on terror.”

While U.S. companies are forbidden to deal directly with these countries, foreign-owned companies are not. According to Langerman, globally there are 700 companies that in 2014 did business with state sponsors of terrorism. Additionally, it’s not illegal for U.S. companies to do business with these countries if they’ve received government approval to circumvent the

sanctions or if their investments fall below a certain threshold. Currently, more than 11 percent of the S&P 500’s market capitalization (approximately \$1.4 trillion) maintains business relationships with those states.

“I’m a capitalist to the core,” said Langerman, “but companies don’t have a conscience. Someone has to hold [them] accountable.”

While Langerman focuses on personal divestment, United Against Nuclear Iran works on divestment at the state level. Comprised of former ambassadors and nonproliferation experts, UANI, a watchdog group, seeks “to prevent Iran from

fulfilling its ambition to become a regional superpower possessing nuclear weapons.” It has successfully leveled corporate campaigns against General Electric, Caterpillar, Huntsman, and others and introduced model legislation on divesting from Iran in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Currently, 30 states and D.C. have adopted some form of divestment legislation or policies based on UANI’s model.

Many Jewish organizations, such as the Union for Reform Judaism, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, also support targeted divestment from Iran to promote human rights and in support of Israel.

In the case of Sudan, sometimes divestment from state sponsors of terrorism corresponds with divestment from fossil-fuel companies. Investors Against Genocide advocates for investment firms to divest from four foreign oil companies that are the largest business partners with Sudan—PetroChina/CNPC, China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation/Sinopec, India’s ONGC, and Malaysia’s Petronas. Many religious organizations have also joined in divesting from Sudan because of human rights abuses in Darfur.

But is divestment effective?

The Patriot Fund only screens for countries on the “state sponsors of terror” list. This approach excludes some of the biggest funders of terrorist groups, such as Kuwait, Qatar, and other Gulf states.

UANI’s state-level legislation has shifted millions of dollars out of the Iranian energy and weapons economy. However, UANI has

“Companies don’t
have a conscience.
Someone has to
hold them
accountable.”



TERRORISM

DIVEST!

from **OCCUPATION**

been critiqued as catering to neoconservative and right-wing nationalists, both in the U.S. and Israel, and having members who may benefit from a destabilized Middle East.

Targeting foreign oil companies operating in Sudan may advance a fossil-fuel shift agenda, as well as constraining the economy of the brutal regime there. However, it's also a movement vulnerable to political manipulation by U.S. oil companies who are fighting for dominance against competitors in Asia.

Recent research says that the most effective way to cut terrorist financing is to catch the groups early, when they are solely dependent on a few key donors. Most non-state terrorist groups are funded by tax and extortion, kidnap for ransom, and individual donors. Some are financed by a local resource, such as charcoal (al Shabaab in Somalia), oil (the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria), or drug trafficking (the Afghan Taliban and al Qaeda in Algeria).

"For too long, the international community has underestimated the diligence with which terrorist groups manage their finances," Tom Keatinge, director of the Centre for Financial Crime and Security Studies, told *Sojourners*. "It is no exaggeration to say that finance is the Achilles' heel of a terrorist organization as it seeks to grow and establish itself—tackling these finances is perhaps the most effective way of restricting terrorist groups. This is not as dramatic as airstrikes and missiles, but if applied correctly can be just as effective, perhaps more so." ■

Rose Marie Berger is a senior associate editor of Sojourners magazine.

'We Think Israel Can do Better'

Church bodies in the U.S. are removing financial support for the occupation of Palestinian territory—but some Jewish groups still see divestment as delegitimizing Israel itself.

By Jim Rice

White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough told an audience this spring that "an occupation that has lasted for almost 50 years must end, and the Palestinian people must have the right to live in and govern themselves in their own sovereign state."

McDonough decried the illegal construction of settlements in Palestinian territory, under Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his predecessors, as intentionally seeking to divide Palestinian communities. He added, "like every administration since President Johnson, we will continue to oppose Israeli settlement activity since it undermines the prospects for peace."

But many activists refuse to continue to merely decry the occupation, year after year, decade after decade, while facts on the ground worsen and a just peace grows seemingly more elusive. For these activists—and they include many U.S. churches, peace groups, and humanitarian organizations—the time has come to put teeth into efforts

to end Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory and thereby impel progress toward a just peace in the region.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been debating various divestment measures since 2004, and last year the denomination voted to divest from three companies that supply equipment used in the occupation of Palestinian territory.

"We as a church cannot profit from the destruction of homes and lives," said Rev. Gradye Parsons, the denomination's stated clerk, after the vote to remove church funds from Hewlett-Packard, Caterpillar, and Motorola Solutions. The church said it has communicated directly with the companies to urge them to stop profiting from the occupation by supplying Israel with surveillance technology, bulldozers, and other products.

"We continue to invest in many businesses involved in peaceful pursuits in Israel," Parsons told *The New York Times*. The church is "still committed to Israel and its right to exist, but we're concerned about the occupation and think Israel can do better."

The broader, global BDS movement—which stands for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions—grew out of a 2005 call from more than 170 Palestinian organizations. The Palestinian coalition, which included church, religious, and cultural groups as well as academics, unions, political parties, and civil society organizations, urged the international community to implement boycott and divestment initiatives to encourage the end of Israel's occupation of Palestine and support for Palestinian civil rights. A group of Christian Palestinians that grew out of the 2009 Kairos Palestine document "A Moment of Truth" called for "the beginning

OCCUPATION

of a system of economic sanctions and boycott to be applied against Israel,” while condemning “all forms of racism, whether religious or ethnic, including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.”

In the U.S., Mennonite Central Committee, the Quakers, and other U.S. religious bodies have also taken steps to divest from companies that profit from the occupation. The American Friends Service Committee has developed a screening tool to help investors determine which companies profit from Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territory. “Companies that consistently and knowingly participate in violations of international law and war crimes cannot be regarded as responsible investments,” said AFSC’s Dalit Baum. Like most U.S. church groups, AFSC recommends that investors target “only companies that support the occupation, settlements, militarism, or any other violations of international humanitarian or human rights law.” The group explicitly “does not call for a full boycott of Israel nor of companies because they are either Israeli or doing business in Israel.”

The United Methodist Church has called on all countries to prohibit “any financial support ... for the construction and maintenance of settlements and the import of products made by companies in Israeli settlements on Palestinian land”—activity the Methodists say “contributes to serious violations of international law, promotes systemic discrimination, or otherwise supports ongoing military occupation.” Like other churches, the UMC doesn’t support a boycott of products made in Israel, but rather products made by Israeli companies operating in occupied Palestinian territories.

An inappropriate tool?

Despite the churches’ efforts to target their divestment at companies profiting from the occupation, their explicit acknowledgement of Israel’s right to exist, and their clear commitment to not divest from Israel, several Jewish organizations have denounced the denominations’ activism. “The [church] leadership is facilitating the delegitimization of Israel in the guise of helping Palestinians,” said Rabbi Noam Marans of the American Jewish Committee after the Presbyterian vote. “An American church punishes the sole Middle East democracy for the sin of safeguarding its security,” Rabbi Abraham Cooper of the Wiesenthal Center said.

Even the liberal advocacy group J Street

“We as a church
cannot profit from
the destruction
of homes and
lives.”



has criticized church divestment actions, writing that it “does not believe that boycotts or divestment will bring Israelis and Palestinians closer to a two-state solution to their conflict, nor are they, for us, appropriate tools in pushing toward resolution of the conflict.” The group added, “We support the Presbyterians’ decision to endorse a two-state solution where ‘a secure and universally recognized State of Israel lives alongside a free, viable, and secure state for the Palestinian people.’”

But other Jewish groups have supported divestment efforts by churches as a nonviolent way to encourage change in the Middle East. *The Times* reported the presence during the PC(USA) convention last year of young Jewish activists wearing black T-shirts with the slogan “Another Jew Supporting Divestment.”

Rabbi Alissa Wise, a staffer for the organization Jewish Voice for Peace, which supports divestment from companies that profit from the occupation, said that divestment “helps Palestinians build their power so that Israel is convinced, not by force, but by global consensus that something has to change.”

For many church activists committed to a just peace for all people in the Middle East, the choice seems clear. If nonviolent means of resisting injustice, such as divestment and boycotts, aren’t possible, then violence will continue to be inevitable. “It all boils down to the money,” Palestinian Tasneem Amro told *Al Jazeera* earlier this year. “Boycott could be more efficient than throwing rocks.” ■

Jim Rice is editor of Sojourners magazine.

OCCUPATION



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Preparing For The Storm

The Greeks know how tightly coiled
are circumstances with many windings
before tragedy's spring snaps.
The horse bolts flame-like from the gate;
we do not see its years of training.

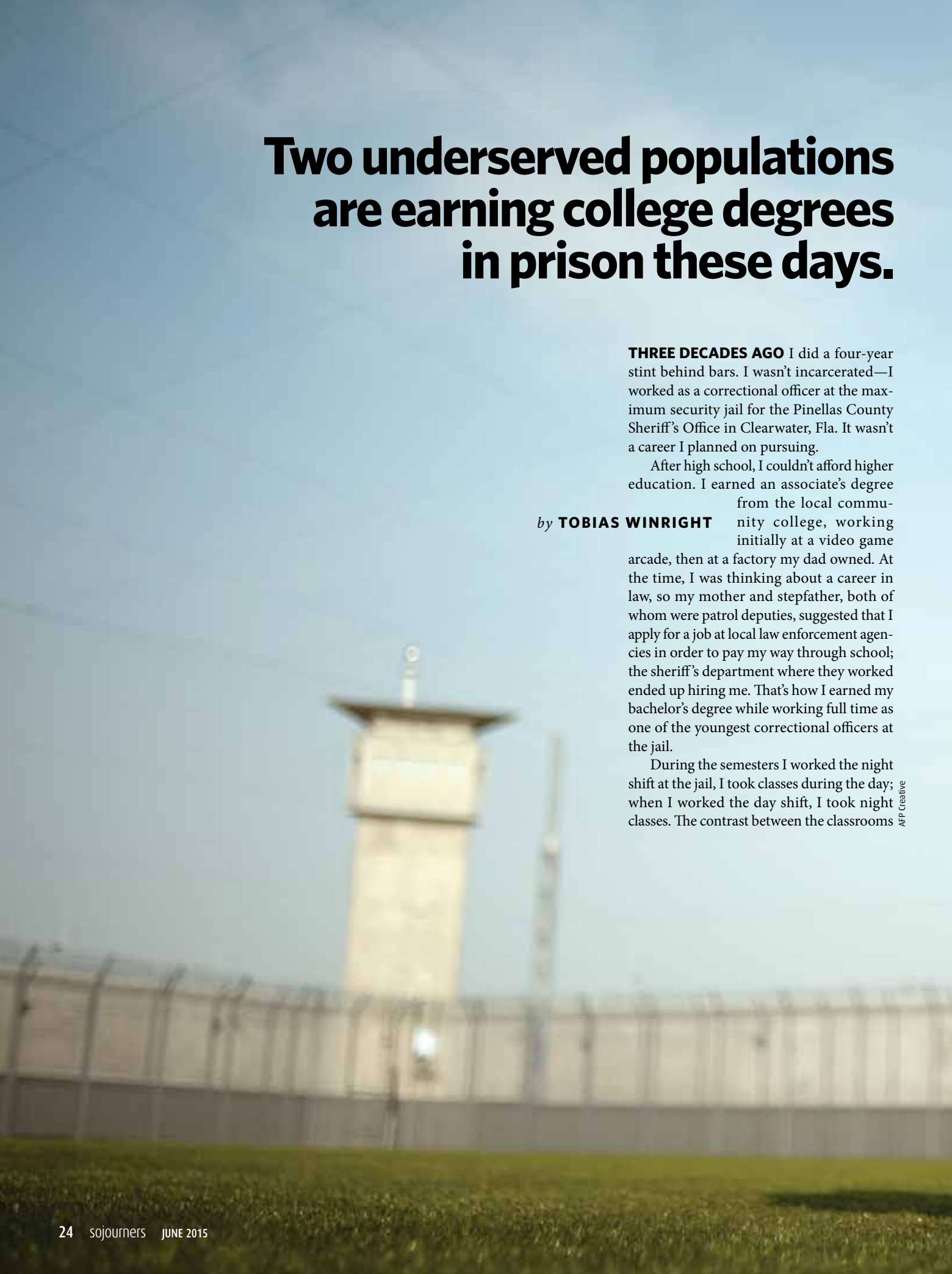
So too, the thunderhead today slow bloating
and thickening with muffled rumblings.
The steeds were restless, but the reins
held tight, until a crack of the whip
unleashed the pummeling flood.

Remember how Gandhi's salt marchers
lay themselves before the horses
of the Raj that trotted to the very edge
of that sea of prostrate bodies
before rearing back in alarm?

Those marchers knew a storm
was brewing, were neither cowed,
nor crushed. The heart is another kind
of stallion, stamping and kicking,
trampling the mind's sour dust.

Lie down, lie down, there is still time.
And watch the horses prance.

Richard Schiffman is an environmental journalist and poet. His collection *What the Dust Doesn't Know* is forthcoming from Salmon Press. Above, an Indian police officer attacks salt marchers in 1930.



Two underserved populations are earning college degrees in prison these days.

THREE DECADES AGO I did a four-year stint behind bars. I wasn't incarcerated—I worked as a correctional officer at the maximum security jail for the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office in Clearwater, Fla. It wasn't a career I planned on pursuing.

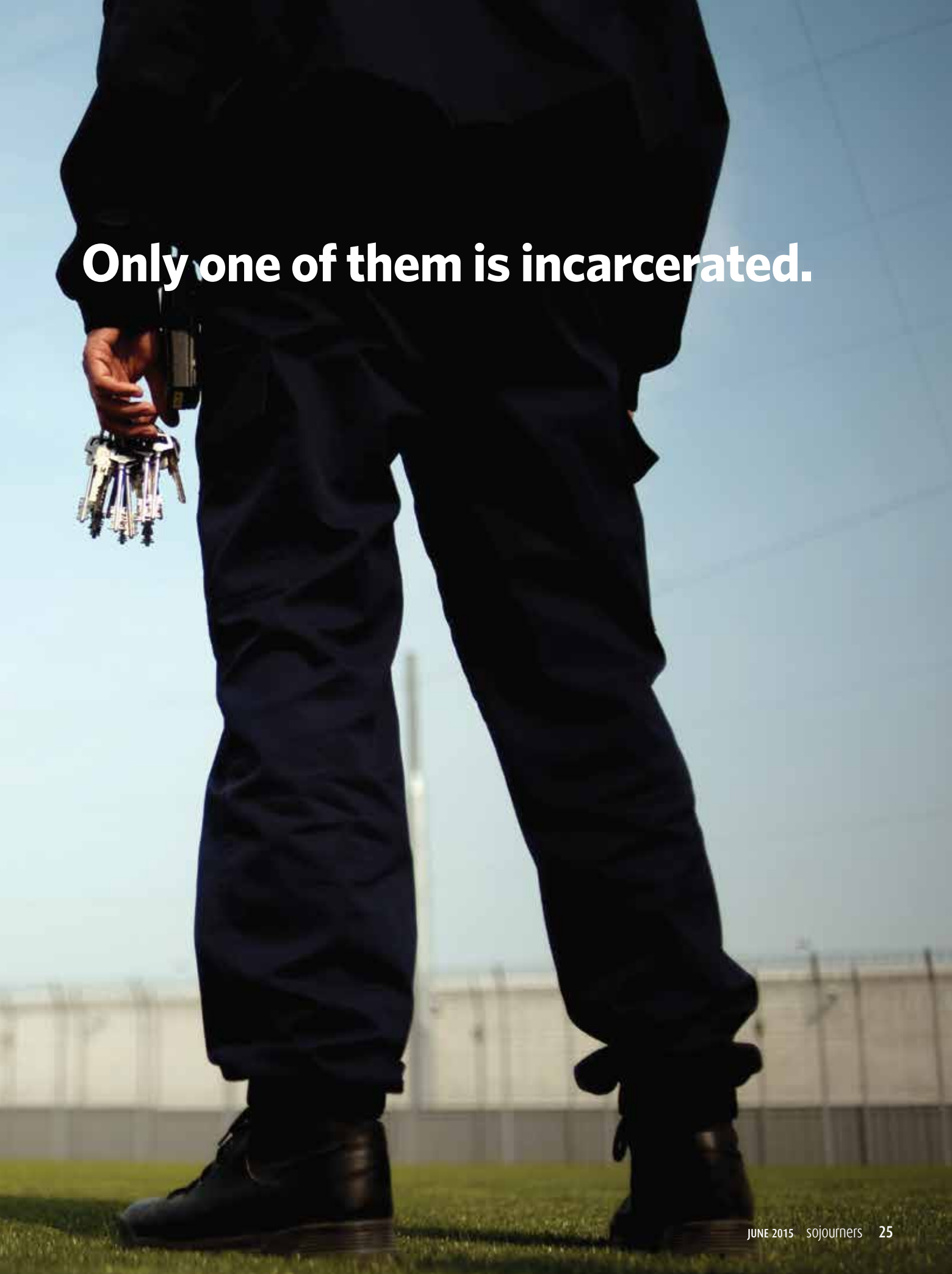
After high school, I couldn't afford higher education. I earned an associate's degree

from the local community college, working initially at a video game

arcade, then at a factory my dad owned. At the time, I was thinking about a career in law, so my mother and stepfather, both of whom were patrol deputies, suggested that I apply for a job at local law enforcement agencies in order to pay my way through school; the sheriff's department where they worked ended up hiring me. That's how I earned my bachelor's degree while working full time as one of the youngest correctional officers at the jail.

During the semesters I worked the night shift at the jail, I took classes during the day; when I worked the day shift, I took night classes. The contrast between the classrooms

AFP Creative

A person wearing dark clothing and boots stands on a grassy field, holding a large set of keys in their right hand. The person is positioned in front of a chain-link fence, and the background shows a clear sky. The text "Only one of them is incarcerated." is overlaid on the image.

Only one of them is incarcerated.

Jail and prison personnel are also doing time, albeit in eight-hour shifts.

and the battleship gray corridors lined with steel-barred cells was striking. At the time, I did not like the jail job; I couldn't wait until I could "escape" to graduate school.

THAT WAS A long time ago. I did make it to graduate school, though I wound up studying theological ethics, not law, and eventually became a professor. But those four years in a Florida jail were a formative time for me—a time that continues to inform my teaching and writing.

Those memories grew especially vivid last year while I was teaching an ethics course for corrections officers and staff at the Eastern Reception, Diagnostic, and Correctional Center. The maximum security facility, located 60 miles south of St. Louis in the small town of Bonne Terre, is Missouri's largest state prison, holding more than 2,600 inmates.

The course I taught is part of Saint Louis University's prison program, which offers an associate's degree both for inmates and those who work in the prison. It is the only on-site prison education program in the U.S. that serves two underserved populations: people incarcerated and prison employees.

With regard to the first population, the United States has the highest per capita incarceration rate in the free world. The U.S. has 6 percent of the world's population but incarcerates 25 percent of the planet's prisoners. With more than 2 million persons in federal, state, and local jails and prisons, our nation's corrections system is increasingly known as "hyper-incarceration." More money is spent per year on building and maintaining prisons than on public schools. Compared to whites, African Americans and Latinos carry a disproportionate burden of being sentenced to prison. Many inmates are also functionally illiterate and poor.

And what do these inmates learn in prison? They don't necessarily learn a corrective lesson of remorse and renewed civic consciousness. "So-called 'correctional facilities' are rife with practices of violence and degradation," writes theologian James Samuel Logan in *Good Punishment? Christian Moral Practice and U.S. Imprisonment*. "Since violence breeds violence, prisons and jails can therefore hardly avoid their current social function as preservers and producers"—not correctors—"of violence." Or, as Logan quotes one ex-offender, "Prison is a school

and violence is the curriculum." This is particularly troubling given that 75 percent of new inmates are imprisoned for nonviolent crimes.

Approximately 95 percent of the incarcerated are released back into society at some point, but many of them find it nearly impossible to find gainful employment. Half of them return to prison within three years.

There's a solution to this vicious cycle: education. Providing education to the incarcerated not only helps inmates to turn their lives around and find jobs after their release, but it significantly reduces the rate of repeated offense, or recidivism. Though participation in any level of education has been proven to reduce inmates' likelihood of repeated offense, a 2005 study conducted among Ohio inmates found that college-level education was particularly effective, reducing the likelihood of recidivism for inmates who participated by roughly 62 percent. What's more, these reduced rates of recidivism actually save taxpayers money. "The direct costs of reincarceration were far greater than the direct costs of providing correctional education," concluded a 2014 report from the Rand Corporation sponsored by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance. Even using conservative estimates, the report found that "correctional education programs appear to far exceed the break-even point in reducing the risk of reincarceration."

Several years ago one of my colleagues, Kenneth Parker, a theologian specializing in 19th century church history, became inspired to start the prison program at Saint Louis University. Supported by the university administration, which views the program as consonant with its mission as a Jesuit, Catholic university seeking to "transform society in the spirit of the gospels," as well as by the Missouri Department of Corrections, the program began as a certificate in theology for 15 incarcerated men (300 applied). When the first class of inmates graduated in 2010, many expressed deep gratitude. Even lifers, who will not be released into society, are making a positive difference within the prison, mentoring fellow inmates. And as Bill Keller noted in a *New York Times* column, corrections officers "believe such programs lower the explosive tensions in prisons."

But prisoners aren't the only ones who



Inmates and guards at the Missouri state prison in Bonne Terre attend classes sponsored by Saint Louis University.

can earn degrees at the prison in Bonne Terre. When Parker first mentioned that he wanted to start the prison program, I thought that it would be great if we could offer courses to the second “underserved” population: the employees. After all, many corrections officers come from a background similar to mine and have only a high school diploma. Offering the degree to employees, I told Parker, would mitigate resentment toward inmates who would be getting access to a degree the guards themselves couldn’t afford.

Plus, just as we should not demonize offenders, we need to remember that police, corrections officers, and other staff in the criminal justice system are persons too. In *Good Punishment?* Logan reminds readers that jail and prison personnel—who are also “doing time,” albeit in eight-hour shifts—bear the scars of imprisonment too. Correctional officers experience tremendous stress, and the job is also dangerous, with many who are physically and verbally assaulted. Their divorce rate is high and so is their suicide rate. The job is a thankless one, and the atmosphere can have a corrosive effect on them. So an education for them might improve their work and their lives.

My students agree. “This program has not only given me a chance to improve my education, but also gave me the unexpected gift of revitalizing my love of knowledge,” said Officer Charles D. Parrot, one of my students. “Without the SLU prison program, I might never have gone back to college; now I have new goals in my career and life that have come from this.”

Another student, Angie Rinker-Lugo, put it this way: “Every person has plans for their own life, but when I look back at the road behind me, it has all these twists and turns that got me to where I am now. I was fortunate enough to earn a living as an office support assistant in corrections without a college degree. This program has given me an opportunity to accomplish something I didn’t see achievable for my future ... an AA degree through a prestigious college like Saint Louis University. Now looking back at how far I have come with the program, I realize that I will go farther than I would have ever thought possible.”

Weekly classes address a range of controversial topics, including same-sex marriage, vegetarianism, abortion, and, yes, capital punishment. Since Bonne Terre is where

state executions are done, this latter issue hit close to home. We covered “ethics avoidance disorders,” such as rationalizing or off-hand self-justification,

which Elon University philosopher Anthony Weston defines as “an automatic excuse-making or defensiveness.” The students honestly wrestled with the moral arguments about the death penalty and other issues, and their views are not necessarily what might be expected.

They learn to be suspicious of easy labeling and bumper-sticker style slogans. They appreciate getting the facts and learning how to better interpret the data. We practice creative thinking and reframing problems: “Why not refocus at least part of our energies toward reducing the number of murders in the first place?” We read

about a “prison-ashram project” created by Bo Lozoff to enable “prisoners to treat their prisons as ashrams,” and we tried to imagine what a prison that does more than function as a warehouse might look like—not only for the incarcerated but for the employees. What if prisons were more like the biblical cities of refuge, we wondered. What if the prison program could really be about restorative justice, and what if it not only made a positive difference in the lives of offenders and staff, but also for victims of crime? We discussed how scholarships could be partially funded by inmates through their work at the prison so that the children of victims of violent crime could attend college.

Students also take courses in other disciplines such as biology, composition, and mathematics. At times they also struggle, not only with academic work but also trying to juggle it with their job and their family responsibilities. The cohort I taught will graduate this coming fall, and the associate’s degree they receive will be well earned.

THOUGH THERE WERE 350 college-in-prison programs in the U.S. in 1984, only a handful still exist, the consequences of President Bill Clinton cutting Pell grants for prisoners in 1994. Successful programs, such as the Bard Prison Initiative in New York, have gotten well-deserved attention, but when New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced a plan last year to underwrite college courses in 10 state prisons, it was met with opposition. “It should be ‘do the crime, do the time,’” said state Sen. George D. Maziarz, “not ‘do the crime, earn a degree.’”

But what Maziarz and others opposed to prison education programs don’t realize is that offenders are already learning plenty while doing the time—lessons of violence, not contrition. So too are many corrections officers and prison staff. And for the sake of all involved as well as for society, learning should be something that lowers the rate of repeated offense, not raises it. ■

Tobias Winright, a Sojourners contributing writer, holds the Maeder Chair of Health Care Ethics in the Gnaegi Center for Health Care Ethics and is associate professor of theological ethics at Saint Louis University. For more on SLU’s prison program, visit slu.edu/prison-program.

Students wrestled with moral arguments about the death penalty.





Testing Jesus

A foreign woman creates a scene in Tyre.

by **RETA HALTEMAN FINGER**

The gospels of Mark and Matthew both include the story of a Gentile woman who begs a reluctant Jesus to heal her daughter (Mark 7:24-30 and Matthew 15:21-28).

I thought of these texts last fall while reading *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, an autobiographical work of the acclaimed poet Maya Angelou, who died last year. Born in

1928, Angelou spent most of her childhood with her grandmother in small-town Stamps, Ark. After a few years of eating candy from her grandmother's grocery store, Maya developed two cavities that, she writes, "were rotten to the gums." However, the white dentist in Stamps did not take "Negro" patients, and the closest black dentist was 25 miles away.

For several days no aspirin touched the blinding pain, so her grandmother finally took her to the white dentist, determined to beg and plead for help. Her grandmother recounts the dentist's final rejection in highly colorful language: "Said he'd rather put his hand in a dog's mouth. ... He said, 'Annie, I done tole you, I ain't gonna mess around in no niggah's mouth.'"

This is the only account where Jesus is out-argued in public debate—and by a woman at that.

This Gentile woman's behavior is shocking.



We may recoil at such naked racism, but in the segregated Jim Crow South, this sentiment must have been typical. I can imagine white churchgoers reacting to this story by thinking, “The nerve of that woman begging help from a white dentist! She got what she deserved.”

In Mark, we find Jesus also comparing a woman of a different race to a dog. Matthew includes the same story, only here Jesus adds that he has no obligation to this woman because “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (15:24). Most commentators are uncomfortable with Jesus’ response in both places, but it is often softened by an explanation that he was testing this woman to see if she had enough faith. Or perhaps he teased her, with a twinkle in his eye, by calling the dogs “puppies”!

But it won’t do. Calling a person a dog was one of the worst insults one could use in that culture. Dogs were not pets; they were unclean scavengers who competed with vultures for carrion and other garbage. We can understand this remark coming from Jesus’ *opponents*, but why from him?

This story is unique in that it is the only account we have where Jesus is out-argued in public debate—and by a woman at that! Why was it included in both Mark and Matthew, why at this particular place in their narratives, and why did Luke’s gospel omit it? What can it teach us about Jesus’ humanity? What can we learn about inclusion and gender roles that relate to our ethical behavior today?

Learning from literary structure

Most gospels scholars believe the narratives of Mark and Matthew were shaped to meet the needs of their communities. (The consensus is that Mark wrote first, and that Matthew used Mark as one of his sources.) A major struggle within the early church concerned the inclusion of Gentiles. Can they be part of the Jesus Movement? If so, do they have to observe Torah? This story demonstrates that Jesus himself made the shift toward Gentile inclusion—and learned something in the process.

The reason Luke omits this story is because, as a Gentile writing to Gentiles, he arranges his plot differently. Already in Luke 2:32, Simeon proclaims the infant Jesus “a light to the Gentiles.” Jesus’ genealogy in Luke 3 goes back to Adam, whereas

Matthew’s begins with Abraham. Jesus’ inaugural address at Nazareth in Luke 4 includes biblical stories of non-Israelites included in God’s plan. This theme continues throughout. Luke’s omission strengthens the case for why Matthew and Mark include this story.

But what if Jesus began healing Gentiles in Mark and Matthew *before* he met the woman from Tyre? He mostly travels throughout Jewish Galilee, but sometimes crosses the lake to the other side, where both Jews and Gentiles live. Mark 6:53-56 and Matthew 14:34-36 include a trip to Gennesaret where Jesus’ fame brought “all who were sick to him,” and he apparently healed them all. But no individuals who are healed, such as the demoniac in Mark 5:1-20 or the Roman centurion’s slave in Matthew 8:5-13, are specifically identified as Gentiles.

However, *after* Jesus makes the shift toward Gentile inclusion in our pivotal story, we find him in Gentile territory to the north and east of Galilee, where he cures a deaf man and then feeds 4,000 people in a desert (Mark 7:31-8:10; Matthew 15:20-39). He is just as popular among Gentiles as he has been in Galilee!

In addition, the passage preceding our story in both Mark and Matthew cleverly prepares readers for the coming encounter with a non-observant, pagan woman. Even references to food link them together! Although Jesus has become wildly popular among the poor and sick of Galilee, he also has run into opposition. Just before he leaves for Tyre, both Mark 7:1-23 and Matthew 15:1-20 recount a purity challenge over food from some Jerusalem Pharisees and scribes. Daniel Boyarin’s book *The Jewish Gospels* has convinced me that eating kosher (foods allowed by the Torah) is not the issue here. Rather, the more recent oral “tradition of the elders” added purity regulations about washing hands and kitchen utensils before eating kosher foods (Mark 3-4)—something many poor people were unable to obey. Jesus’ rejection of oral traditions ends with a sharp retort that what really makes people dirty is not ritually impure food but evil intentions that come out of the human heart (7:17-23).

So when Jesus leaves Galilee for the region around Tyre to the north, is he fleeing his opponents or looking for some

badly needed R&R? Or both? In any case, “he entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there” (Mark 7:24). In Matthew, after ignoring her shouting, Jesus scolds the woman with the same phrase he used earlier when sending his disciples out to preach: “I was sent ‘only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel’” (Matthew 10:6, 15:24). In other words, “I can’t help someone like you!”

Within this literary context, we can now see that, rather than testing this Gentile woman, *Jesus himself is being put to the test*. Surprisingly, his statement supports the oral “tradition of the elders”: “It is not fair to take the children’s [clean] food and throw it to the [unclean] dogs” (Mark 7:27, Matthew 15:26). For those who insist that Jesus was perfect and never sinned, these are jarring words indeed!

Visiting Tyre

Although Mark 3:8 notes that Jesus’ fame had reached the region around Tyre and Sidon, Jesus has never been there until now. These cities were important and wealthy ports along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. In the surrounding region bordering Galilee, various ethnic groups coexisted, though often separated by social class.

Mark identifies this woman as Greek and of Syrophoenician origin (7:26). Phoenicia was part of Syria, which Alexander the Great had conquered in the late fourth century B.C.E., introducing Greek culture. After Alexander died, Seleucus, one of his generals, claimed rule over Syria, Persia, and Asia. This Seleucid dynasty continued spreading Greek religion and culture throughout the region, eventually including Palestine. (This was the cause of the Maccabean war of 167 B.C.E., when law-observant Jews revolted against encroaching Hellenist domination under the Syrian king Antiochus IV.)

Matthew calls this woman a Canaanite (verse 22), perhaps associating her with the original inhabitants of the land that Joshua was supposed to drive out. Either way, both authors identify this woman as thoroughly pagan, an idol-worshiper representing centuries of bad blood between Israel and her neighbors.

The gap between rich and poor

In first-century Palestine, rulers and other upper-class people lived in cities. Because of peasant debt, the upper classes were acquiring more and more land in the surrounding countryside, thus exploiting the perennially poor who were reduced to sharecropping. Some Jews lived in the region around Tyre, often lower-class farmers driven off their

We overhear an unusual conversation between a male who is superior by gender and a female superior by class.

land in Galilee. So when Jesus comes here, probably to rest, the house that he enters (Mark 7:24) likely belongs to Jewish peasants like himself.

This background leads me to suspect that this Syrophoenician woman has a higher social status than that of Jesus. Normally she would have ignored him, but gossip travels fast. She hears of Jesus’ reputation and is desperate to get help for her daughter. Thus we overhear an unusual conversation between a male who is superior by gender and a female superior by class.

But Jesus also one-ups this woman because many Israelites understood themselves as better than their traditional enemies, the Syrophoenician Gentiles. In the same way that many white Americans try to pull rank over people of color, so many in Israel understood themselves as preferred by God above other nations and ethnic groups. Nevertheless, this nameless woman has a great need, and only this Jewish rabbi has the power to help her. Like Maya’s grandmother, she will beg and plead for her tormented daughter. She will do whatever it takes.

Gender, honor, and shame

Think over other accounts of Jesus and women in the gospels. Do women ever challenge Jesus in public? It was a role women did not play in that culture. They belonged in the private sphere of life, running their households and raising children. It was even shameful for a woman to speak to an unrelated man in public.

But for men, public verbal sparring was part of maintaining one’s honor in this honor/shame society. Men gained honor

by silencing a rival in public argument. Throughout the gospels, men repeatedly challenge Jesus, hoping to humiliate and shame him. They set up traps such as, “Should we pay taxes to the emperor or not?” (Mark 12:13-17). But Jesus always has the perfect retort so that his questioners are “utterly amazed at him” (verse 17).

Thus this Gentile woman’s behavior is shocking. Though no woman should ever enter a house to meet an unrelated man—especially uninvited—in Mark she does exactly that (7:24-25). She bows politely, but immediately begs him to heal her daughter.

In Matthew she creates a public scene in front of Jesus and his male disciples. “Send her away!” they say. Unlike the hemorrhaging woman in Mark 5:27, she does not silently sneak up to touch the fringes of his cloak. Even when rejected, she does not give up. She becomes the only person in the gospels, man or woman, who outwits Jesus in a public debate. Playing on his racist image of children and dogs, she turns it on its head much in the way that African Americans in the 1960s transformed the slur “black” into “black is beautiful.” “Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs!”

As the loser in this exchange, Jesus does not get defensive. Rather, he concedes! “For saying that, you may go. The demon has left your daughter” (Mark 7:29). Here we have a clever woman who breaks convention and uses her wit to get what she wants. We have a man who does not let his ego get in the way of admitting that he has learned something vital from a woman. Many women should find this Jesus more approachable and admirable than one who never makes a mistake. And what a model he becomes for men—one who is humble and self-confident enough to graciously admit when he is outwitted!

Finally, we Gentiles owe a great debt to this unnamed woman who convinced Jesus that non-Jewish “dogs” can eat at the same table with the “lost sheep of Israel.” ■

Reta Halteman Finger, co-author of *Creating a Scene in Corinth: A Simulation*, taught Bible at Messiah College in Grantham, Pa., and writes a Bible study blog at www.eewc.com/RetasReflections.

'THEY SAVED MY LIFE'

Finding h



The Housing First model gives formerly homeless people the stability of housing and ongoing support to get back on their feet. One woman's story.

FOR YEARS, Dee Curry thrived in her job as a community-based outreach specialist, coordinating and connecting local residents to Washington, D.C.'s health services. "I never intended to become homeless," Curry said. "My job meant everything to me. But, being empowered as a transgender woman, I encountered a lot of adversity and eventually suffered burnout."

That burnout led to substance abuse, then incarceration, then homelessness. By the time she arrived at a hospital six years ago, Curry was suicidal. Diagnosed with bipolar disorder, she had been flitting between different places for temporary shelter. "People were not good to me. I was mistrustful of everyone," she said.

The hospital psychiatrist finally persuaded Curry to contact Pathways to Housing DC, a nonprofit in Washington, D.C., that implements the Housing First model among those with severe mental illness. Housing First offers the most vulnerable, chronically homeless people permanent housing and the supportive services to address mental and physical health, substance abuse, employment, education, and family reunification so that people can get back on their feet. Other models to alleviate homelessness may require program participants to be sober or eligible for employment in order to qualify for housing. The Housing First model reverses this logic.

"We provide housing first because we made a commitment to listen to the people we serve. We asked them what they wanted and needed. They almost always said 'I need the housing, first, before I can work on other

Dee Curry, 59, once faced chronic homelessness, unable to manage her substance abuse and mental illness. Under the Housing First model, Curry has transitioned off the streets into her own home and is actively seeking employment.

nerhome

issues,” said Pathways to Housing DC executive director Christy Respress.

Pathways cites an 85 percent success rate for keeping people off the streets once they have housing coupled with permanent supportive services. Housing First also proves to be more cost effective: The research arm of the National Alliance to End Homelessness used information from several studies to demonstrate that permanent supportive housing costs are usually offset by eliminated emergency shelter costs, reduced police and jail costs, and significant reductions in health care (physical and behavioral) costs.

Once program participants are housed, they receive wraparound support services. Pathways’ multidisciplinary Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams—comprised of mental health specialists, psychiatrists, nurses, employment specialists, and addiction specialists—work for months or years to address an individual’s specific needs by connecting them to appropriate care and services. And Pathways partners extensively with other local organizations to leverage their unique offerings, such as job training, meal provisions, and furniture donations.

“They saved my life,” said Curry, 59, who is now clean and on a path to finding employment and, once again, becoming a community health and transgender advocate. “I don’t think I’d be here if I didn’t get the help I needed.” ■

Verena Radulovic is a photographer based in Washington, D.C., with an interest in urban development, education, and poverty reduction. To learn more about Housing First, visit pathwaystohousing.org or the National Alliance to End Homelessness (endhomelessness.org).



THE LONG ROAD BACK
Those emerging from chronic homelessness often find navigating social services overwhelming. Pathways to Housing DC’s Assertive Community Treatment team members and specialists guide them through an administrative maze of paperwork and follow-up calls. As a transgender woman, Curry feels awkward providing legal documents that still contain her birth name when applying for jobs. Above, Curry waits to meet with her ACT team member at Pathways to help her in the process to legally change her name.



A HELPING HAND: Hannah Roberts, Curry’s employment specialist at Pathways, meets with her twice weekly. Here, Roberts and Curry practice and prepare for Curry’s upcoming job interview at a local supermarket. Curry was nervous. Roberts offered to accompany her on her interview for support.

Other models require participants to be sober or employed to qualify for housing. The Housing First model reverses this logic.

“When you are poor, people feel like they can tell you what to do. But when people are given a choice, empowered to make their own decisions, they can own their own recovery.”



TOUGH MOMENTS
After listening to Roberts talk on the phone with government officials, Curry discovers that her GED records cannot be found. GED is a requirement for various jobs to which Curry is applying, and she received her diploma while briefly incarcerated in the late 1970s. But at that moment none of the state or city records offices could locate it. “I know I’m going to have to take the GED again if they can’t find it,” sighed Curry, temporarily frustrated.



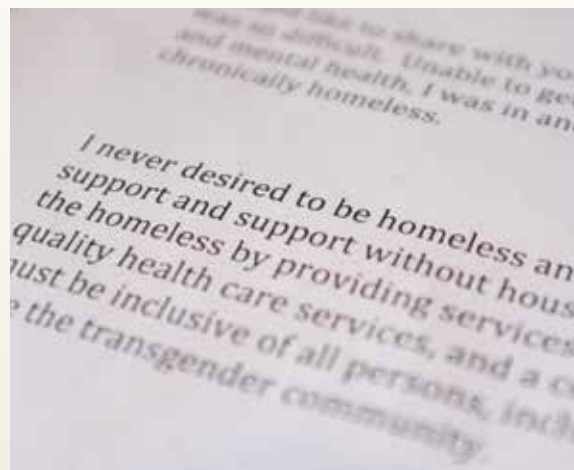
ON A BUDGET
Curry runs errands on the day she receives her monthly benefits. For most Housing First consumers, Social Security or disability benefits comprise their sole income. Dee meets monthly with members of her ACT team to review her expenditures and ensure that she stays within budget.

her home

**"We asked people what they needed.
They almost always said 'I need the housing, first.'"**



A FEW TRIES
When Curry first received housing she continued to have run-ins with law enforcement, finding herself in and out of jail. In her second home, she battled substance abuse. "Relapse is often part of recovery," said Christy Respress, Pathways to Housing DC's executive director. "Lack of judgment [from others] is really important, to be a friend and a support. [Chronically homeless people] aren't awarded dignity very often." Now in her third apartment, Curry no longer struggles with addiction: "Finally, I feel like myself."



GIVING BACK: To hone her public speaking and advocacy skills, Curry presented at a citywide event on homelessness. Her prepared notes relay her own experiences with homelessness and Housing First.



NEW STARTS, NEW SKILLS
Roberts and Curry work together on Curry's typing. To qualify for higher-skilled jobs, Curry needs to be able to type 30 words per minute. Afterward, Curry practices writing email inquiries to prospective employers. "Dee is really motivated to find work," said Roberts.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT
Every Sunday night, members of Curry's church fellowship group gather for dinner. Healthy social connections are essential to helping formerly homeless people develop support systems within their communities. Over time, this often results in a reduced need for social services.

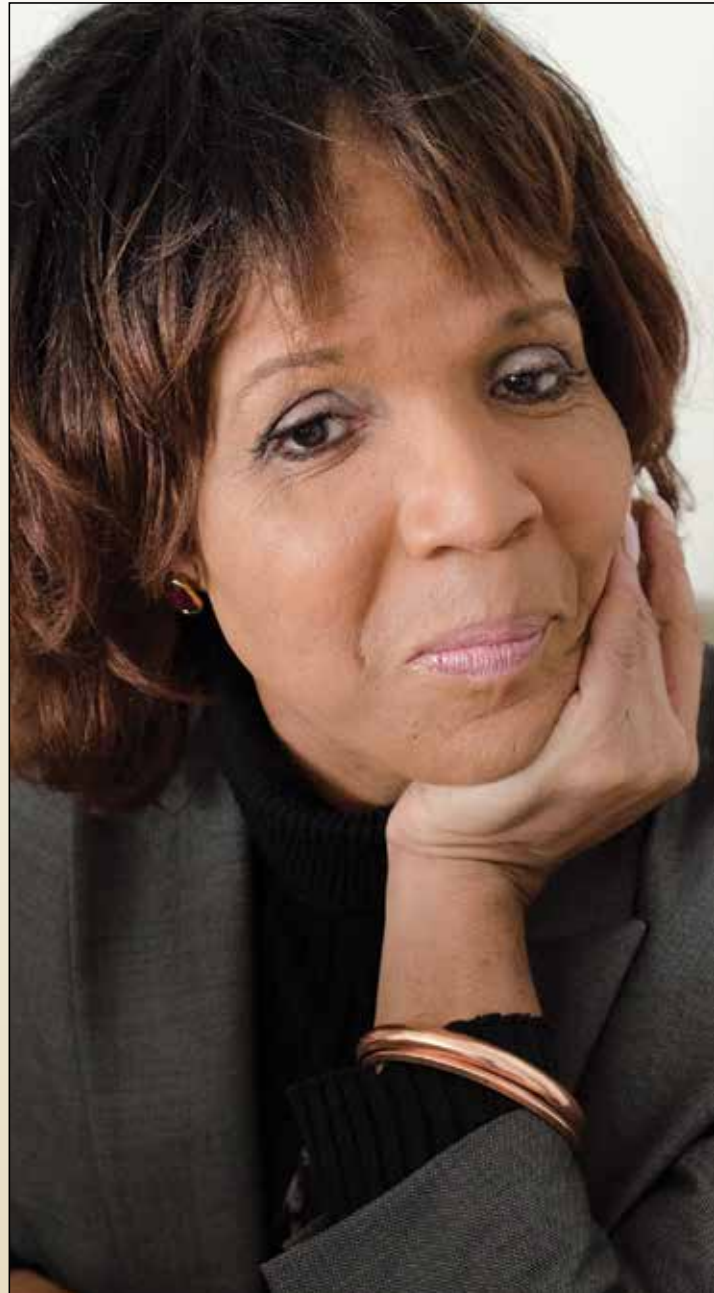
Pathways cites an 85 percent success rate for keeping people off the streets.



A NOTICEABLE CHANGE: Many staff members recall Curry as withdrawn when she first arrived at Pathways. "Today Dee is joyful and confident and has a strong desire to find meaningful work," said Respress.



HOME: "Part of the struggle of life when you have ups and downs is finding how to navigate getting back to yourself. Because of this program, I am better able to see that I deserve a better living and I am hopeful," said Curry, at the door of her new home.



her home



By Richard Twiss

A Sacred Beat

How Native Christians are reclaiming tradition to create an “Indigenous hymnody.”

AT THE WORLD Christian Gathering of Indigenous People in 1996, our North American Native delegation was unable to find any “Christian” Native powwow music that we could use to dance to as part of our entrance into the auditorium. This was important at the time, as we didn’t feel the liberty to use “non-Christian” powwow music for a distinctly Christian event. A contemporary Christian song by a Caucasian worship leader using some Native words and a good beat was selected.

Except in a handful of cases (believers among the Kiowa, Seminole, Comanche, Dakota, Creek, and Crow tribes, to name some)—and those always in a local tribal context—Native believers were not allowed or encouraged to write new praise or worship music in their own languages utilizing their own tribal instruments, style, and arrangements.

What they *were* encouraged to do was translate Western-style music, hymns, and songs (for example, “How Great Thou Art,” “Amazing Grace,” “The Old Rugged Cross,” “A Mighty

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 David P. Gushee reviews
Solidarity Ethics



position to be “of the devil,” thus requiring total elimination.

For example, Native pastor and Bible teacher Jim Chosa and co-author Faith Chosa have demonized the Native drum in their book *Thy Kingdom Come Thy Will Be Done In Earth*, writing, “We also are aware of many cultural elements which are distinctly in contradiction to the Word [Bible] and unredeemable, such as the use of drums as the sole musical instrument for worship of God.”

To demonize the drum is to demonize the songs and the stories that go with it—and

There is a new and steadily growing ethno-musical library of Native-style worship music.

the entire genre of traditional Native music.

The Chosas’ dismissal of the Native drum and elevation of Western music (that is, harmony, melody, arrangement, and churchly dependence on the pentatonic scale as reflective of “a heavenly sound”) is a prime example of neocolonialism. Such views emanate from the worldview assumptions of modernity, colonialism, and paternalism that were accepted by earlier missionaries. While these views and attitudes are diminishing in popularity and authority under the weight of the favor contextual efforts are finding, they still prevail in many conservative circles. These attitudes reflect a dualism that neatly divides the human experience into isolated compartments that can be individually analyzed, categorized, and assigned meaning apart from the whole of the experience.

Within that worldview framework, Indigenous music as a “cultural category” has suffered under the weight of the hegemonic bias of a “Western-tuned ear” that cannot hear the beauty of Creator—Jesus—in it. This mindset is absolutely predisposed to reject Native music, dance, and art as uncivilized, pagan, unsophisticated, primitive, base, evil, satanic, and so on.

THE CRUCIALLY IMPORTANT expressions of traditional cultural music and dance have been denied Native followers of

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New & Noteworthy



CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

The duo Ibeyi are Naomi and Lisa-Kaindé Díaz, 19-year-old French-Cuban twins with Yoruba roots—a West African culture transplanted to Cuba during slavery. Ibeyi’s self-titled album begins and ends in prayer; in between is a fusion of English and Yoruba, minimalist piano and percussion, jazz and hip hop. XL Recordings

PREACH IT

The Collected Sermons of Walter Brueggemann, Volume 2 brings together more than 50 sermons by the biblical scholar and powerful preacher, arranged according to the liturgical year. Also includes special-occasion sermons and a scripture index. A good resource for pastors and laity alike. Westminster John Knox

SKETCHING THE WORD

In *And the Word Became Color: Exploring the Bible with Paper, Pen, and Paint*, artist and teacher Debby Topliff describes what she calls “visual lectio divina”—a method of Bible study that incorporates simple line drawings. Debbytopliff.com

SOUL SEEDLINGS

Faith Forward Volume 2: Re-imagining Children’s and Youth Ministry collects stories, insights, and models from the 2014 Faith Forward gathering on nurturing the spiritual lives of young people. Edited by David M. Csinos and Melvin Bray, with a foreword by Jennifer Knapp. CopperHouse

Fortress is Our God”) into their own languages, fully retaining Western cultural musical constructs.

Participation in traditional powwows, with their key features of drumming/singing and dancing, for many Native Christians has been discouraged or forbidden. Long considered a seditious threat to government control and an obstacle to the evangelization of tribal people, there was a long-concerted effort on the part of the U.S. government and missionary organizations and workers to put an end to these practices. Were it solely in the hands of some Native evangelicals to determine what Native ceremonies, rituals, or other cultural practices would be allowed, all would disappear forever, considered by the historic evangelical mission

Epic Bad Behavior

EARLIER THIS year came a flurry of new horror stories about the abuses of human dignity that are, apparently, common in many of America's college fraternities. First came the video from the University of Oklahoma in which a busload of "true gentlemen" of Sigma Alpha Epsilon are seen and heard spewing racist bile. Shortly thereafter the revelation that the Kappa Delta Rho chapter at Penn State had maintained a private Facebook page featuring nude photos of unconscious young women became national news.

The old saying "Once a frat boy, never a man" may be just another sweeping stereotype. But the evidence is mounting that many of the nation's fraternity houses are the breeding ground for an exclusive culture of entitlement and impunity that their mostly white, upper-class members carry into their future roles in the elite circles of business and government.

It should be noted that when we talk about "fraternities," we are really

Fraternities have become the tail that wags the dog in U.S. universities.

just talking about the historically all-white social organizations with Greek-letter names. Historically black fraternities have their own problems, especially with hazing, but they have experienced nothing like the epic bad behavior found among their paler brethren.

The recent fraternity scandals are no anomaly. At least since the release of the ultimate frat movie, *Animal House*, way back in 1978, there have been occasional flurries of alarm about fraternity-related sexual assault, alcohol poisoning, or hazing-related injuries or deaths.

Three years ago, there was the *Rolling Stone* story "Confessions of an Ivy League Frat Boy," which featured



Dartmouth SAE member Andrew Lohse's revelations of decadence, depravity, and outright cruelty in that organization, whose alumni include former Secretary of the Treasury and Goldman Sachs CEO Hank Paulson. Lohse's journey back from the frat inferno began with an op-ed for the Dartmouth campus paper, in which he wrote (appetite-spoiler alert): "I was a member of a fraternity that asked pledges ... to: swim in a kiddie pool of vomit, urine, fecal matter, semen, and rotten food products; eat omelets made of vomit; chug cups of vinegar, which in one case caused a pledge to vomit blood ... among other abuses."

Mostly because of the prominence of its alumni, Dartmouth has long been ground zero for national concern about fraternity abuses. *Animal House* itself was based on screenwriter Chris Miller's experiences as a Dartmouth member of Alpha Delta Phi. In recent years the school administration has gone through repeated rounds of hand-wringing and soul-searching over the problem. The concern became especially pronounced last year when all the bad publicity about fraternity abuses contributed to a 14 percent drop in the number of applicants to the school—the "metric" by which elite college administrators live or die.

But Dartmouth is only the tip of the iceberg. In

"The Dark Power of Fraternities," a 14,000-word cover story in the March 2014 *Atlantic*, based on a yearlong investigation, Caitlin Flanagan detailed the havoc fraternities wreak (at least 60 frat-related deaths since 2005 and hundreds of injuries and assaults) and the umbrella of protection they enjoy from their host universities. Fraternities, according to Flanagan, have become the tail that wags the dog in U.S. universities. Schools are captive to them, in no small part because frat alums are big donors and so wield outsized influence. Fraternities and sororities also provide the housing for one of every eight students at four-year schools, infrastructure that cash-strapped schools would find hard to replace. And, while the admissions offices may never admit it, fraternities are central to the sex-and-booze-saturated, late-adolescent-playground atmosphere that attracts students to "the college experience."

Some schools, mostly small, Northeastern liberal arts colleges, have abolished fraternities and lived to tell the tale. If U.S. higher education is going to fulfill its historic promise as an equalizer of opportunity, more will need to follow suit. ■

Danny Duncan Collum, author of the novel *White Boy*, teaches writing at Kentucky State University in Frankfort.



Continued from Page 39

Jesus—yet are integral in the development of an “Indigenous hymnody.”

But many Native believers now engaged in contextualization efforts—a relational process of theological and cultural reflection within a community, seeking to incorporate traditional symbols, music, dance, ceremony, and ritual to make faith in Jesus a truly local expression—are experiencing deep meaning as they put on their powwow regalia and dance in a church or Christian gathering or traditional powwow. It helps bring wholeness to their world as both Native and Christian.

In 1995, Mohawk musician Jonathan Maracle wrote a song that was selected

They are creating a new genre of music to carry the sound of the people along with the gospel of Jesus.

to be part of the national *March for Jesus* soundtrack used all across Canada. The song utilized some Mohawk words, drumming, and style. Maracle had written dozens of songs as a contemporary Christian artist and church worship leader before that time, but all had been Western-style music. The popularity and success of the song opened his eyes to the possibility that Creator could use and bless traditional Native-style music, contrary to what he had been taught by church and ministry leaders in his early Christian experience.

In 1998, Maracle was asked to participate in the World Christian Gathering of Indigenous People in Rapid City, S.D., by leading a session of music for younger participants. It was then that he fully realized the power of Indigenous-style music to convey biblical faith to Indigenous audiences in a way they would enjoy and appreciate—and that would uniquely speak to their “Native heart and soul.” Beyond that, listeners of every ethnic background have found this style of music very moving. More than 130,000 CDs of music written and recorded by Maracle and his band, Broken Walls, have been distributed, and he has performed concerts or led music for Christian events in



Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music*

MARIA AND THE RABBI

IT'S THE 50TH anniversary of *The Sound of Music*. I never thought I'd write about it here, but someone recently offered me the kind of gentle admonishment that Maria might have given to the von Trapp children. Maria is usually right, and my friend is too. One of the wisest film critics I know, a man dedicated to contemplation and activism and who doesn't shy away from the more challenging edges of cinema, still considers it his favorite film.

Don't get me wrong—it's not the greatest movie he's ever seen (that's usually an entirely different category to “favorite”). But *The Sound of Music* did something unique for my friend—it showed him that there was a bigger world out there. My friend was suffering constant night terrors. When *The Sound of Music* finally showed up in his town, it was the first film ever to be approved by the local religious authorities. He felt safe to watch it (as did many other townsfolk—it played at their local theater for *six years* without a break); it became a bath for his soul. The scale, the energy, the sheer heart seemed to leap off the screen. The night terrors stopped, and never came back. He says he's seen it nearly 60 times in the last 50 years. Lest we forget, the story is one of hope trumping almost unimaginable odds.

There's a reason *The Sound of Music* has endured, and it's not sentiment alone.

It also did much to shape cultural perceptions of the vowed religious life. Maria isn't exactly the most authentic cinematic depiction of the institutional experience, but nor is she the most unrealistic portrayal of what happens when a desire for service is given space to breathe. She has cinematic company in the form of Kathleen Freeman's hilarious Mother Superior with a nasty edge in *The Blues Brothers*, Moira Kelly's impassioned Dorothy Day in *Entertaining Angels*, and most recently in television (or whatever Amazon Originals are) by Kathryn Hahn's Rabbi Raquel in *Transparent*.

Rabbi Raquel may be the most fully realized TV or movie clergy character, at least in the way she acknowledges the particular gifts and challenges of being called out to offer leadership while also living among the community. When are you off work? How do you maintain a relational life when hundreds of people expect you to be not only their spiritual adviser but also their surrogate parent or teacher? *Transparent* is warm and funny about this where *The Sound of Music* is prim and proper. But what unites them is that each wants its female religious figures to lead. ■

Gareth Higgins curates www.moviesandmeaning.com, a festival of stories and light that make our lives better.



Author and activist Richard Twiss

Mennonite Central Committee

more than 300 venues. His songs are sung in Native and non-Native churches all across North America.

This Indigenous-style music has been missing in the Native church. It is music that moves the Native soul—unlike a piano, guitar, or synthesizer. Charles H. Kraft notes that the longer a people or group utilizes a majority of foreign forms, the longer

To demonize the drum is to demonize the songs and the stories that go with it.

Christianity will remain a foreign religion, which I think is particularly true of music. Kraft writes, “When the [Native] Christians think of the Lord as their own, not a foreign Christ; when they do things as unto the Lord meeting the cultural needs around them, worshiping in patterns they understand; when their congregations function in participation in a body, which is structurally Indigenous, then you have an Indigenous church.”

In large part, for a generation of younger

Native ministry leaders, the growing contextual movement sprang from the increasing disappointment they felt with the “white character” of the Christianity they had been brought up in. They loved the music, dance, ceremony, and notions of ritual they were beginning to discover in a different reading of the Bible. Moving away from their modernist and culturally Eurocentric-informed view of their own faith journey, they began to long for, dream about, and experiment with new models and forms of expressing their faith as Native men and women.

MARACLE AND MANY other Native Christian musicians compose and perform today in order to serve contemporary purposes and needs, though their music is drawn from and inspired by historical tradition. They come from a background of never or only recently sharing their tribal music as Christians in a Christian setting. They are creating a new genre of music to support the contextual movement and carry the sound of the people along with the message of the gospel of Jesus.

While more conservative Native evangelicals have vigorously opposed the acceptance of these musical innovations and ceremonial adaptations as being what they consider profoundly syncretistic, contextualization efforts also have been viewed with suspicion by more mainline liberals as being “not authentic enough” or disingenuous, being manipulated for “evangelizing the sinner” vs. being embraced as deeply sacramental in a worship context. They have been resisted

by the traditionalists because these efforts were viewed as compromising Native religion, or being co-opted by Christian

Indians who didn’t really know what they were doing. The traditionalists saw the contextualization efforts as “invading” Indian ways to take them away, or at least to inappropriately borrow them. These tensions still exist.

For the First Nations community of Jesus-followers, there is the huge challenge of how to interpret and incorporate music, dance, and ceremony in light of history, contemporary needs, adaption, and acculturation. This emerging new hymnody is

similarly a pastiche of tradition where people are seeking new meanings in old traditions as they attempt to transform a blend of historical/cultural musical constructs, styles, and meanings into a new genre. It is inevitable that something will get lost in the process. Yet this new music has been one of the most attractive and meaningful components of the contextual movement as people experience great personal spiritual enrichment within the context of Native cultural ways. In addition it has served as a dynamic tool of diffusion as thousands of recordings of this style of music have been distributed across the land.

Besides those mentioned earlier, other Native Christian musicians who are writing, recording, and distributing music and have emerged in the past 15 years or so include Robert Soto (Lipan Apache), JoAnne Storm Taylor (Blackfoot), Michael Jacobs (Cherokee), Bill Miller (Mohican), Tom Bee (Lakota), Jan Michael Looking Wolf (Grand Ronde), Terry (Ojibwe/Yaqui) and Darlene Wildman, Jim Miller, Stephen Tindle (Cherokee), and Cheryl Bear (Nadleh Whut’én). This is only a small representation of those who are engaged in contextual music. Their songs are played in musically progressive churches (Native and non-Native) throughout North America.

Today, nearly two decades after the inaugural World Christian Gathering of Indigenous People, when no “Christian” Native powwow of dance music could be found, there is a new and steadily growing ethno-musical library of Native-style worship music being written, recorded, and distributed by Native artists. All societies have their own unique music, and now an Indigenous hymnody has begun to emerge out of the contextualization movement in North America. ■

Richard Twiss (1954–2013) was an activist, author, pastor, and founder and president of *Wiconi International*, a nonprofit that works for the betterment of Native people and communities in the spirit of Jesus. This article is excerpted and adapted from *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys*, by Richard Twiss. Copyright (c) 2015 by Richard Twiss. Used by permission of *InterVarsity Press*, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515, USA. www.ivpress.com

Reviewed by Christopher N. Breiseth

IMPROVING OUR SAFETY NET

Social Security Works! Why Social Security Isn't Going Broke and How Expanding It Will Help Us All, by Nancy J. Altman and Eric R. Kingson.
The New Press.

WITH A LONG history of involvement in the evolution of the Social Security program, Nancy Altman and Eric Kingson are the right analysts to explain the program and demonstrate conclusively that, with careful tending by Congress, Social Security will be there for future generations: a critical part of retirement finances for the vast majority of the American people and, for many, the only retirement support. They argue that Congress should be strengthening and expanding Social Security—and they show how this can be done and the bill paid.

The book makes clear that Social Security is not an entitlement program but a social insurance program with premiums paid through payroll taxes. Its \$2.8 trillion trust fund represents the full-faith support of the American people to provide essential insurance coverage for all our people against the universal hazards of death, disability, and old age. It compares how our system stacks up against those of other advanced industrial societies. (We are distinctly less generous to our senior citizens than other developed nations.)

Primarily through the death and disability provisions, Social Security also provides the largest amount of support to children of any federal program, keeping millions of children above the poverty line. Indirect support—helping people not have to bear the full financial burden of caring for elderly parents whose financial independence is assisted through both Social Security and Medicare—increases the number of beneficiaries further.

After an in-depth description of Social Security, Altman and Kingson turn to the well-financed, determined opponents of the current system. These include Peter G. Peterson and his Peterson Foundation and the Fix the Debt group, including some members of the Simpson and Bowles

"Your sons and
your daughters
shall prophesy"

—Acts 2:17



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Commission. Together with the Koch brothers, whose father—like George W. Bush's grandfather, Prescott Bush—was a determined opponent of both FDR and his Social Security program, these entities have spent more than \$1 billion to mislead the American people about their major social insurance system. Thanks to these determined opponents, along with the Heritage and Cato Foundations, "political and media elites have lost an understanding of the conceptual underpinnings that have led to Social Security's popularity, and have been convinced to see Social Security as a problem rather than the solution that it is."

These billionaire-led opponents of Social Security promote several assumptions to undermine the public trust in the longevity of the system, particularly among younger Americans. These include assertions that Social Security is going bankrupt, spends more money than it takes in, is under threat from a demographic tsunami, and inferior to investing on one's own. Altman and Kingson

explain how each of these assertions is false or misleading.

Opponents came close to persuading policymakers and media analysts to change the system to cut benefits for the middle class, means test Social Security, or convert Social Security away from an insurance model toward a private savings model. Happily the tide appears to have turned. Those who believe in the centrality of Social Security as a social insurance program for all, as Franklin Roosevelt and his Secretary of Labor, Frances Perkins, designed it to be, seem to have grabbed hold of the public debate. Even with a Republican Congress, there is serious talk of genuine improvements to Social Security.

The book concludes with extensive consideration of proposals to strengthen the financial underpinnings of Social Security and make expanded benefits possible. Most important, the book provides a solid basis for the public debate that is essential for policy modifications that will strengthen this

most important, most popular federal government program. ■

Christopher N. Breiseth is chair of the board of the Frances Perkins Center in Newcastle, Maine (FrancesPerkinsCenter.org), which is dedicated to preserving Perkins' legacy, at the head of which is Social Security.

Reviewed by David P. Gushee

ESCAPING THE BONDS OF PRIVILEGE

Solidarity Ethics: Transformation in a Globalized World, by Rebecca Todd Peters. Fortress Press.

REBECCA TODD PETERS offers here a concise treatment of the major moral concern of a large part of Christian social ethics: the structures of globalized economic life and their manifest injustices and unsustainability. She also offers a moral framework to guide the thinking of unjustly, and often blindly, privileged First World Christians about the moral situation in which we find ourselves.

She proposes concrete action guides for how such First World Christians can gradually and intentionally empty ourselves of these privileges in order to stand in solidarity with those whose lives are harmed in the delivery of our advantages. In the end what emerges is a kind of liberation ethics for those who didn't know they needed to be liberated—in this case, from their own advantages.

More and more primers are being written to help privileged North Americans gain some idea of what exactly it takes for us to enjoy those "everyday low prices" over at the big box store. It should not be so difficult; after all, we can just look at the labels and read on the internet about the people over in Bangladesh and Thailand who work in inhumane conditions to get us our superfluous T-shirts for \$4.99.

Peters briskly takes us into the two-thirds world and lets us catch a glimpse of who really pays the price for the consumer goods we enjoy. But especially valuable is her survey of the "neoliberal" and indeed "neo-colonial" economic and political structures (trade deals, IMF, etc.) that fix the current

"The effective struggle against global warming will only be possible with a responsible collective answer, that goes beyond particular interests and behavior and is developed free of political and economic pressures... On climate change, there is a clear, definitive and ineluctable ethical imperative to act..."

- Pope Francis
January 18, 2015



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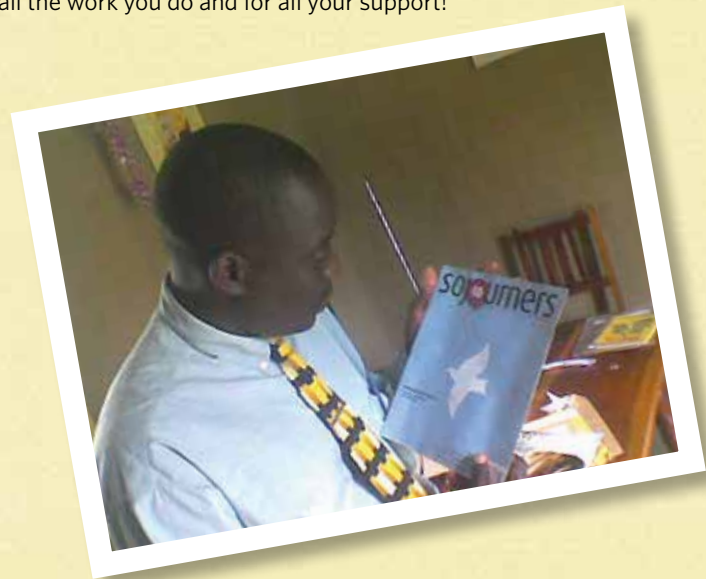
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Rev. Edward Amimo

MEET REV. EDWARD AMIMO, one of our faithful Sustainers with a passion for taking the Sojourners movement global! Rev. Amimo lives in Bukura, Kakamega, in Kenya, where he is a pastor. He learned about Sojourners for the first time in 2009 and joined the Sustainers Circle in 2010, with the goal of strengthening Sojourners to have a broader impact worldwide.

Rev. Amimo believes that it is important for Christians to work ecumenically, and he is encouraged to see partnerships forming to put faith into action for social justice. "Sojourners' message brings people together through God without the boundaries of denominations," he explains. This collaborative, bridge-building approach to social change is a large part of what inspires his commitment to Sojourners' work.

We are honored that Rev. Amimo includes Sojourners in his giving, and we are thrilled to be partnering with him in this way. Thank you, Rev. Amimo, for all the work you do and for all your support!



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regime in place so that the cheap exploited labor of, let's face it, brown bodies continues to serve the comfort of white bodies in the Northern Hemisphere, all in the name of free-market capitalism and free trade.

As an ethicist, what I found especially compelling in this book was Peters' deep dive into the ethics of solidarity, a term that becomes her central moral norm. Hers is the first book in Christian ethics I have seen that actually traces the concept to its historical roots and then its use in political theory, theology, and ethics.

Today, solidarity is most strongly associated with Catholic social teaching. Peters shows that it was the wonderful Pope John XXIII who "first introduced the term ... into papal discourse" in 1961. John Paul II is also credited for "a much more vigorous usage of the term" as part of his fabulous contri-

What emerges is a kind of liberation ethics for those who didn't know they needed to be liberated.

bution to Christian social ethics. Liberation theology, especially emerging from Latin America and now also in feminist ethics, has made solidarity a central ethical concept as well.

Peters' own working definition of solidarity builds carefully both on this existing literature and on the lived experiences by which privileged First World people take a journey from indifference to sympathy to kind acts to sustained charity and ultimately through these preliminaries to a theory and practice of solidarity. Solidarity is "a model of being in the world that challenges the prevailing social order" and that involves "working across chasms of [privilege, class, social location] difference toward a common goal" of a sustainable and just world.

Solidarity honors difference, is answerable to the oppressed, and demands action and not just talk. Such actions look like "tak[ing] an inventory of all the areas of our lives and examin[ing] ways in which we can change our habits and behavior to decrease both our environmental impact and our exploitation of workers in the developing

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world.” She calls for comprehensive reconsideration of what we do about “transportation, food, clothing, money, housing, recreation/entertainment, and energy.”

This work is an important contribution to the quest for a just world and deserves the serious study of all Christian people. But be warned: It will require significant changes from the reader who takes it seriously. ■

David P. Gushee, a Sojourners contributing editor and the Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics at Mercer University, is author of 20 books on Christian ethics.

Reviewed by Julie Polter

‘THAT SONG YOU SING FOR THE DEAD’

*Carrie & Lowell, by Sufjan Stevens.
Asthmatic Kitty Records.*

BIBLICAL LAMENT includes both pleas to God for help and mournful dirges. Sometimes they are rooted in individual travails and grief, other times in anguish for those crushed by injustice or war.

The psalmist and the prophets dig deep into visceral images of bodily suffering—and stretch up, out, yearning to find symbols and metaphors in nature that might capture the mercy and presence of a God who, the psalmist isn’t afraid to say, is sometimes a bit elusive.

The album *Carrie & Lowell* is indie musician Sufjan Stevens’ multifaceted lament: For a mother, Carrie, he lost at least twice—to mental illness, addiction, and abandonment when he was a child and to cancer when he was a man. For the grief that surprised him after her death. For his inability, as he sings to his mother, to “save you from your sorrow,” hinting at that lingering, impossible guilt felt by so many children of troubled parents. Stevens reaches no tidy resolution in the course of the work (although early on, in the first song, he does offer that most basic, difficult, and saving grace: “I forgive you, mother”).

So why would you want to listen to something that speaks of so much pain? For starters, these are exquisitely spare, beautiful, and haunting folk-not-quite-rock songs. Stevens’ gift for hook and melody here is distilled, deceptively delicate, carried by few instruments and subtle effects. Layered vocals and harmonies swell up on a bridge or carry a song wordlessly to the end, like waiting choruses of angels, or ghosts.

Meanwhile Stevens’ lyrics move, like mourning itself, not in a straight line forward, but circling between memory, despair, longing, befuddlement, anger, regret, confession, and, at least occasionally, an acknowledgement of the “signs and wonders” that have him holding on to, or at least holding out for, God. These songs are psalm-like in their blunt details—suicidal thoughts, attempts to bury pain in sex and drugs, childhood neglect (“When I was three, three maybe four / She left us at that video store”), divine betrayal (“For my prayer has always been love / What did I do to deserve this now? / How did this happen?”), and the reminder, more than once, that “We’re all gonna die.”

These songs are also psalm-like in their hunger for a God who may be just out of the singer’s reach, but that he believes is there—glimpsed in the stars and ocean breakers, or in a young niece who seems to bear hope when everything else seems futile: “My brother had a daughter / The beauty that she brings, illumination.”

These are sad, sad songs. But they are some of the prettiest and truthful sad songs you’re likely to encounter this year. That artistic alchemy, of creating beauty out of pain, might speak, obliquely at least, to

something sacred and redemptive, if you’re of a certain inclination. But to wrap this work of lament in a tidy redemption narrative is to hide its real power and strength: speaking honestly from the space between loss and longing; doubt and belief; the suffering that is and was, and the mercy that might yet be. ■

Julie Polter is a senior associate editor of Sojourners.



Erika Totten

Bio: Erika Totten is a leader in the Black Lives Matter movement in Washington, D.C., and the black liberation movement at large. She is a former high school English literature teacher, a wife, a stay-at-home mom, and an advocate for the radical healing and self-care of black people through “emotional emancipation circles.”

1 How did you get started with “emotional emancipation” work?

Emotional emancipation circles were created in partnership with The Association of Black Psychologists and the Community Healing Network. I was blessed to be one of the first people trained in D.C. I had been doing this work before I knew what it was called. My organization is called “Unchained.” It is liberation work—psychologically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally.

I want to tell people to be intentional about self-care. Recently, we had a black trans teen, who was an activist, commit suicide. A lot of times you need to see a counselor or therapist, which is often shunned in the black community. Because of racism, we are taught that we need to be “strong.” But it’s costing us our lives. As much as we are dismantling systems, we have to dismantle anything within ourselves that is keeping us from experiencing liberation right now.

2 What does liberation look like to you?

It’s a multitude of things, and it changes every day. But mainly it is having the space to be. To just exist. To not have to perform. It is the ability to exist and live life unapologetically. You don’t have to accept me, but my life shouldn’t be in danger because of my skin. And for my children, liberation means walking down the street and not being harassed. Liberation means living.

3 Why is “black lives matter” hitting such a chord these days?

When we say “black lives matter,” we mean *all* black lives. If we say we’re anti-oppression, we have to tackle *all* the systems. So we attack homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, misogyny—which is misogyny



particular to black women.

You can’t deny [racism] now. We no longer have to rely on mainstream media to tell our stories. Our parents didn’t have 24-hour access to community news growing up. They couldn’t amplify a message with a single retweet. We are effortlessly connected globally now. For instance, we are connecting our liberation to our brothers and sisters in Brazil who are experiencing genocide. That’s a big deal.

4 Has religion or spirituality played a role for you in this work?

I do believe we are all created in the image of God. I know that everything God is, I am—peace, abundance, compassion, gentleness, wisdom, truth, power.

People forget that Jesus flipped over tables. They don’t want to talk about that part. As Christians we need to think, “Where would Jesus be?” He would be with the people.

A lot of times when we’re doing actions, we don’t know if we’re coming

home. We’re being followed by police. They put you in handcuffs and take you away if you are a leader in the movement. So when I know that what I am doing is righteous, that God is with me and protecting my children, everything else—the critics and all of that—just falls to the side.

5 What role do you wish the churches would play in the movement?

I wish the churches would just stand up. Faith without works is dead. So what are your “works,” and are they making you uncomfortable? Because if you are comfortable, there is no growth. If standing up and forming a line in front of the police makes you uncomfortable, then you do that. Because you’re supposed to be protecting us and speaking up for us. All churches should have an antiracism training and white dominant culture training. They need to have these hard conversations. And not be defensive. Just listen and stand up.

—Interview by Jenna Barnett

The Soulful Bells of Summer

THE SEASON AFTER PENTECOST is a challenge. Some churches call it “ordinary time.” This is where most of our life is lived, spiritually speaking. The fact that other churches call it “the season after Pentecost” reminds us that a miraculous tongue of fire is needed for any sermon to *work*—and the Holy Spirit has a tongue of fire for us. Pentecost propels us through ordinary time. The Holy Spirit can take as sorry a lot of losers as the ones Jesus chose as disciples and turn them into apostles, martyrs, world-changers. God has always done more with less-promising material.

A retreat at a monastery gave me a glimpse of what ordinary time means. By the time 8 a.m. Mass rolls around, we’ve already been in church *three times that day*. Mass is beautiful, we leave buoyantly, the Trappist monks are nearly chatty. Then the bell rings. It’s time for Terce, another hour of prayer. That bell sets me to sighing—weren’t we *just* in church? Terce is like the Sunday after Easter or Christmas—a letdown. Same building, half full of



people, and with a quarter of the energy. And it is precisely then that it’s important to worship God. The church’s worship of God carries on when we’ve all gotten bored or tired. Such worship is good for souls. Preachers’ souls included.

Jason Byassee is pastor of Boone United Methodist Church in Boone, N.C., and a fellow in theology and leadership at Duke Divinity School.

[JUNE 7]

Out of the Depths

1 Samuel 8:4-20, 11:14-15; Psalm 130; 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1; Mark 3:20-35

ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL famously said that the biblical prophets show God’s pain. Here in 1 Samuel, God grants the people’s wish for a king because “they have rejected me from being king over them” from “the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day” (8:7-8).

God’s people are supposed to be distinct, set apart, so as to be a blessing to the world (Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6). Jesus’ encounter with his biological family in Mark 3 shows anew that God calls a people out to be unlike others. Jesus’ family thinks he’s crazy (Mark 3:21—a verse missing from sentimental portraits of the Holy Family). Jesus responds that his *actual* family is those who do the will of God, leaving his family of origin out in the cold. So too God’s people, Israel, are to be different from the nations around them. But they insist they’d rather be identical to them: “We are determined to have a king over us, so that we also may be like other nations” (1 Samuel 8:19-20). God wants a people set apart to be a light to the nations. And, like insecure middle

schoolers, we cram that light under a bushel in a pathetic effort to fit in.

What does the world do without a people whose set-apart life shows real hope? It suffers silently. God’s people suffer too when we fail to live out the peace Jesus calls us to, the holiness that the law demands, the justice for which the prophets screech. “Out of the depths,” the psalmist cries. The *De Profundis* (the first words of the psalm in Latin) has opened funerals for millennia. When we are in the deepest despair—even over our own failures!—God gives us words suitable for our pain. And a hope to wait for in the morning, like the one for which watchers at sea are desperate (Psalm 130:6).

Ever felt despair at the failings of God’s people? Of course you have! Take heart. God despairs with you. And God will bring the dawn. And there is not a thing we can do to stop it or even hurry it.

“Preaching the Word,” Sojourners’ online resource for sermon preparation and Bible study, is available at sojo.net/ptw.

[JUNE 14]

Anoint This One?

1 Samuel 15:34-16:13; Psalm 20; 2 Corinthians 5:6-17; Mark 4:26-34

SAMUEL PRESENTS one of the saddest lines in scripture: “And the Lord was sorry that he had made Saul king over Israel” (1 Samuel 15:35). We want to protest, to console: *Wait, God, you didn’t do it; the people did.* But God lets humanity go our own destructive way. God could stop us, but mysteriously God does not.

What God does instead is start an insurgency. God anoints a new king in the midst of the reign of the old. Even God’s own prophet questions the sanity of this (16:2). Anyone would question the wisdom of choosing Jesse’s unlikely youngest son when so many stronger, handsomer options are available. Yet God says, “Rise and anoint him; for this is the one” (16:12). God’s insurgency looks weak. It’s a handful of tiny seeds falling between our fingers, an unpromisingly sown field waiting to produce we know not what (Mark 4). And yet, look! A crop we couldn’t have imagined that the dark loam of the earth throws up overnight, a bush that makes shade for every bird. This is the way God’s insurgency of goodness works. It looks pitifully weak. It’s actually unstoppable strong. One day it will flood the world with love the way God has always intended.

The reading from Paul includes some of his most famous phrases: “We walk by faith, not by sight”; “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation!” I’m particularly captivated by this: “The love of Christ compels us” (2 Corinthians 5:14). It’s a strong verb, “compel,” often misused to justify using state power to make “sinners” do this or that. Let’s fill it with content from our gospel text. The soil has a fecundity to it, a fertile creativity that launches a crop. We know not how. Growth is compelled by something beyond our understanding. This is the strange way God goes about saving a world gone to seed. “There lives the dearest freshness deep down things,” poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote. As great a hash as we make of God’s beautiful world, God will recreate it from within. You watch. And be amazed.

[JUNE 21]

Thief of Joy

1 Samuel 17:57-18:5, 10-16; Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32; 2 Corinthians 6:1-13; Mark 4:35-41

TO PREACH WITH St. Mark is to preach with urgency. “Immediately” appears so often it almost seems a writer’s tic. The point is not just grammatical—Jesus is in a hurry in Mark. Preachers and leaders, like all other disciples, have to hustle to keep up.

Of course if you hurry you might strain yourself, wear down, get sick. And these lectionary passages have a red thread running through them: sickness. Jealousy and resentment roil us internally and can make us less than human. The psalmist and the evangelist describe God as a quieter of terrifying seas. And Paul promises to the Corinthians the calming presence of Christ in the midst of unimaginable hardship. The texts drive us to ask with the disciples, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (Mark 4:41).

Saul demonstrates one of the great spiritual maladies of any age: envy. Everything young David does turns to gold. He’s besties with Saul’s own son, and worst of all God has abandoned Saul. Epic, tragic Saul reminds me of the hope of one of Fyodor Dostoevsky’s similarly cursed characters—he prays he could serve God if only as a bad example. Amy Laura Hall says, “Comparison is the thief of joy.” When a 29-year-old was nominated for an Oscar this year, NPR reported the reaction of many older, less-recognized veterans of Hollywood: sheer, agonizing envy.

The psalmist gives voice to Israel’s terror of the sea. It’s a place of chaos where sea monsters reign and from which many don’t come back. Is the disciples’ terror in the storm any surprise? Greeks tell tales of great seafarers and naval conquests. These Jews are just happy to get back to land, thank you very much.

And Jesus, sleep seeds still in his eyes, rebukes the storm with a word. The evangelist’s Greek is so much better than our English: “they feared a great fear” (4:41). And they asked the right question: Who is this?

Jesus is the “name that charms our fears,” writes Charles Wesley. Even resentment, even epic tragedy, even the sea, even the worst versions of ourselves.

[JUNE 28]

Time to Get Up

2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27; Psalm 30; 2 Corinthians 8:7-15; Mark 5:21-43

“HOW THE MIGHTY have fallen,” David laments over Saul and his beloved friend Jonathan (2 Samuel 1:25). It is interesting that David laments equally over the bitter king who tried to kill him and over the friend whose soul was his own, whose love meant more to him than the love of women. Death is a great leveler. We should all tremble before its omnivorous power. The dust that used to be a good person is no different from the dust that used to be a bad person.

“Will the dust praise you?” the psalmist asks in verse 9. The answer is harder than it might appear. The psalm prays thanks for

Take heart. God despairs with you.

delivery from death—the sort of thanksgiving that the hemorrhaging woman of Mark 5 likely prayed after her healing. Ancient Israel had no great sense of life after death. God should keep God’s people from death because only then would there be a people to praise God. But in light of the resurrection of Christ, the church has come to realize that, yes, the dust can praise God. Just as God took dust in hand in the beginning and blew life into it to make *adam* (the human), so some day God can collect the dust that we have become and blow life into it once more. Our hand will be as cold as the dead little girl’s in Mark 5. And Jesus will intertwine fingers with ours and invite us to get up.

The church is a people who wouldn’t exist without the resurrection. How then should we live? Paul suggests our life is based on manna. We can trust that God will provide, but not too much, not too little. No doubt Paul had those who complained that he was mixing religion with politics or economics. Paul responded with his most breathtaking description of the mystery of the incarnation: “Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.” The church has yet to fathom the mystery of that verse. But it is worth all the effort dirt can muster to try. ■



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Book Groups For Dummies

AS AN occasional participant in a book group, I'm happy to report that the wine at the last one was pretty good. Also the fellowship, the spirited conversation, and, finally, before we ran out of time, discussion about the book, which consisted mainly of how most of us didn't finish it, or start it. In my case, however, I couldn't put it down.

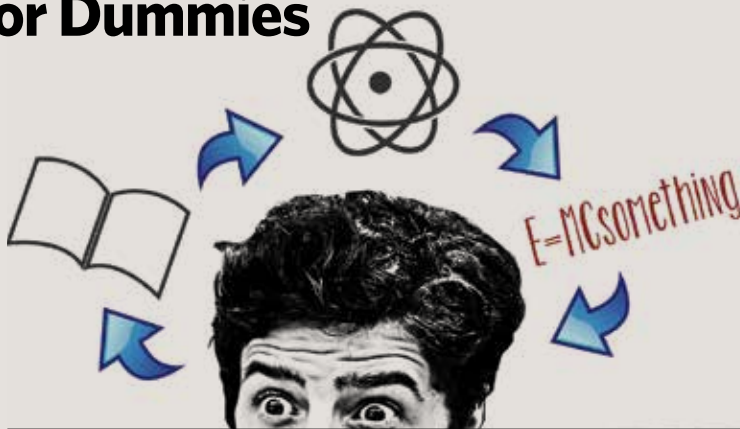
It was *The Lost City of Z*, a recounting of an intrepid explorer's frightening ordeals in the unforgiving jungles of the Amazon, which ultimately ended when he succumbed to cannibalism. It was a chilling read, one that convinced me to confine my travels exclusively to the continental United States. Because if there's anything that ruins a good walk, it's being

A Brief History of Time is a great read, especially the one page I understood.

eaten by your own species. According to the book, at the turn of the last century certain tribes in remote South America believed they could spiritually cleanse themselves by devouring their enemies. (Fortunately, that practice has died out, except for in a few red states during primary season.)

I read every word of that book, usually with the covers pulled tightly around me and all the lights on, while making sure that I didn't appear delicious to anyone in the vicinity.

I ALSO READ every word of my next book, *A Brief History of Time*. In fact, I read every word twice. I'd read a paragraph, then I'd think real hard, trying to comprehend that at the beginning of time the universe was infinitely dense and infinitely small. I'd fail, of course, then I'd read it again, struggling to pay attention. I'd read a paragraph, and then wonder if we had enough milk in the house. I'd read some more, then



wonder if Alicia in *The Good Wife* ever divorces her husband. I'm only on season two and ... DON'T TELL ME!

But I couldn't fully grasp this book because, to quote Republican lawmakers, I'm no scientist. And watching every *Star Trek* movie (and then watching them again) doesn't make you one.

Written by theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking (who is more than theoretical, I think—more like an *actual* physicist—since I've seen him on television), *A Brief History of Time* was a bestseller because millions of people wanted to have it on their coffee tables when friends came over. (It's important to bend it back and forth a bit to make it look understood.) But as an instructive scientific text, it's a closed book to me, even when I bent it back and forth. I even tried reading it out loud with an English accent, the original accent in which the book was written, to no avail.

But to my credit, I did come away with a couple of important scientific concepts:

■ According to Hawking, time travel is theoretically possible, but only to the future. You can't travel to the past and buy Apple at \$6 a share or invent Pringles. But venturing into the future requires moving faster than the speed of light, which means your cell phone won't work. And trust me, as the mass of your body

increases to galactic size, checking Twitter might be the last thing on your mind. (And you'll wish you'd cut back on the Pringles.)

■ Starting with the Big Bang, the universe has been expanding, but it will one day run out of energy and contract, ultimately reverting to what Hawking calls the Big Crunch. But that is trillions of years away, plenty of time to pack. (Travel tip: pack light.)

■ There was no space or time before the Big Bang, a spontaneous event physicists refer to as a "singularity," which, coincidentally, also describes the condition of my dating life during college.

■ The most important physics research today is being done at the Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland, which a few years ago discovered the Higgs boson—the long-sought "God particle," which gives all matter its mass, if not its attitude. Why they found this in Switzerland and not in the United States is a surprise, since our particles can beat up their particles. Unfortunately, further research has been delayed after a major malfunction of the Hadron required a two-year shutdown. Apparently, somebody had installed Windows XP, so they had to reboot. (I'm no scientist, but even *I* know you stick with Windows 98.) ■

Ed Spivey Jr. is art director of Sojourners.

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